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THE

CATECHIST'S MANUAL:

OR,

SUGGESTIONS FOR LECTURING

ON

St. Mark's Gospel.

BY SAMUEL HINDS, D.D. BISHOP OF NORWICH.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

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PREFACE.

TOTWITHSTANDING the many advantages of education which candidates for Orders enjoy, there are some points of their professional instruction which make no part of an Academical course. The young clergyman is generally called on to commence a full course of ministerial duty, qualified indeed with a competency of learning, but without that gradual practical training, by which men of all other professions are initiated into the business of their respective callings. Clients are slow in trusting the inexperienced barrister; and the young physician's practice is limited for many years to a small number of patients; but the young minister of the Gospel is, for the most part, summoned from the abstract pursuits of a college life, to enter at once on the new and untried routine of parochial visiting, of aiding or guiding religious and charitable movements, of preaching and catechising.

The following Readings from St. Mark's Gospel have been prepared with the hope of lessening some of this difficulty—that, viz., which arises from want of practice in composing Sermons, expounding Scripture,

conversing on religious topics with the uneducated; in short, 'dividing' or dispensing 'the word of God.'

The acquirement of this qualification is quite distinct from the acquirement of religious knowledge. A man may be very well informed, and still be at a loss to make a ready and effectual use of what he knows. Among the otherwise well educated clergy, accordingly, there are not a few who have recourse to published Sermons. Still more must this be the case of those who have not had the same advantages of It is often the only resource they have; education. and in employing it, they are not unfrequently led to suppose, (agreeably to the maxim so injudiciously inculcated by Addison,*) that it is a proof of modesty to preach sermons which have received the approbation of good judges, rather than their own crude essays. An indolent habit steals insensibly on the preacher. Occupied perhaps with much distracting business, he feels less and less disposed to apply himself to the task of habitually preaching and lecturing from his own stores; and his addresses consequently, in and out of the pulpit, never attain that forcible character, which can only be given by the genuine expression of one's own feelings and convictions.

My first object, then, in the following publication,

^{*} Spectator, No. 106.

has been to provide a manual for catechists, and young clergymen generally, who may be experiencing the difficulty I have noticed. I have been desirous of putting into their hands a book, from which they may supply themselves, not with the sermons of another, but with materials which may be readily worked up into sermons of their own; and—what is of more permanent consequence—may lead them on to the early practice of depending on themselves.

With this main object in view, others have occurred to me, as admitting of being combined.

Laymen as well as clergymen are sometimes required to perform a simple act of kindness or duty—that of reading the Bible to the sick, the aged, or the ignorant. This work of charity is made more effectual for good, if the reader, as he proceeds, can offer some explanatory remarks, or some brief application of Scripture. The Catechist's Manual may, it is hoped, be found useful for this purpose.

Other occasions there are, too, in which this assistance may prove acceptable. Masters and heads of families not unfrequently combine religious instruction with daily family worship. And rightly. A passage read from the Bible is an essential part of the religious exercises of a family; and no occasion can be more suitable than this, for introducing any remarks which may serve to explain the meaning of

the passage, connect it with other parts of Scripture, or apply it to the practical business of life.

A Family Bible might seem, at first sight, to be sufficient for all this; and, without making an invidious distinction in favour of any one, it may be fairly admitted, that more than one of those in circulation contain a rich store of commentary, and may be consulted throughout with edification. But what is called a Family Bible, is not, after all, a family lecture-book. From its very form, it is rather calculated for reference in solitary study; and is, in fact, more frequently consulted by the members of a family individually, than used for the purpose of reading and expounding to a family circle. Such, at least, has been the result of my own observation; and, under this impression, I have endeavoured to make the Catechist's Manual a book which may be more conveniently applied to this use. The commentary is so framed as to be easily transferred, if needful, to homelier language, and otherwise levelled to the understandings of the weak and ignorant.

Occasional deviation from the manual is indeed what I should be as unwilling to prevent, if it were practicable, in the family lecturer's case, as in the catechist's and preacher's. It is a part of his duty, which may and ought to be rendered easy, but not superseded. Christianity is a social religion; and for one who is reading the Bible for the benefit of a circle of friends to give a social character to his task, he must occasionally say something that is his own—must vary or follow up the remarks of his manual, and express his assent or dissent to the views which it suggests. It may be desirable that he should even encourage and invite his hearers to contribute their share of remark, to ask for further explanation of what is not understood, and freely to communicate their own suggestions and impressions.

The religious intercourse which is thus carried on, be it remembered, is not only one mode of discharging a duty which each individual owes to God; but is a bond of domestic union, which divine goodness has added to the ties of nature and of worldly pursuit; and has added, we may hope, for the express purpose of uniting a family as such for ever. When the ordinary course of society, not to mention the ruder mischances of fortune, has dispersed, after a few years of union, the party which assembled round the father's fire side, what is the natural fate of early affection, kindred pursuits, and all that mingles in the spell of If as children of this world only we have been united, the union may be more or less delightful, may be more or less lasting, but it must yield to this world's decaying influence. Do we wish to rivet it for ever? Do we wish to carry it on to a period,

when we shall be 'as the angels which are in heaven?' We must begin, in an earthly home, the intercourse of angels; and, by exercising together a common faith and a common hope, prepare to enjoy together a common heaven.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

O.			· .				
							PAGE
The Gospel of Jesus Chr	rist	•	•	•	•	•	I
John the Baptist's office	1	•					2
Jesus baptized .				•			5
Jesus tempted .			•	•			8
Jesus calls Simon, Andr	ew,	Jam	es, an	d Joh	n.		9
Jesus teaching .	•		•	•	•	•	13
The miracles of Jesus	•	•	•	•	•	•	14
СН	ΑP	TER	II.	•			
Jesus cures a palsied ma	n	•					19
Jesus calls Levi, and eat	s w	ith pu	ıblica	ns an	d sinn	ers	20
Jesus answers the questi	on,	why l	his di	sciple	s did :	not	
fast		•		•			22
The disciples pluck the	ears	of co	rn on	the s	abbat	h.	23
CH	AP'	rer	III.				
Jesus cures a man wit	h a	witl	hered	hand	lon	the	
sabbath-day .							25
Jesus charges the uncle	an	spirit	ts, not	t to m	ake h	im	
known		_					26

	PAGE
Jesus appoints and sends forth the twelve apostles.	26
Jesus is accused of being beside himself, and of being) -
an agent of Satan	29
Jesus declares that his disciples are his mother and	L
his brethren	30
CHAPTER IV.	
Parable of the sower	32
Explanation of the parable	33
Responsibility of those instructed	34
Images representing the kingdom of God .	35
Jesus calms the sea	37
CHAPTER V.	
Jesus cures a demoniac, and permits the evil spirits	8
to go into a herd of swine	. 39
The raising of Jairus's daughter	. 41
Jesus heals a woman afflicted with an issue of blood	44
CHAPTER VI.	
Jesus is not acceptable in his own country .	. 46
Jesus sends forth his apostles in parties of two	o .
together	. 48
Death of John the Baptist	. 52
Jesus feeds five thousand persons with five loave	•
and two fishes	. 54
Jesus walks on the sea	. 56
Jesus is popular	. 58

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER VII.	
Jesus exposes the perversion of the Law by the	PAGE
Pharisees	60
Jesus cures a Syrophœnician woman's daughter .	63
Jesus cures one who was deaf, and had an impediment	
in his speech	65
• • •	
CHAPTER VIII.	
Jesus feeds about four thousand persons with seven	
loaves and a few small fishes	67
Jesus gives sight to a blind man	69
Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ	70
CHAPTER IX.	
Jesus foretels that some then present should live to	
see the coming of his kingdom	73
Jesus is Transfigured	75
The impression made on the apostles by our Lord's	
prediction of his betrayal, death, and resur-	
rection	79
Jesus cures a child possessed by a dumb spirit	81
The twelve discuss the question, who was to be first	
among them, and have their notions of priority	
corrected by Jesus	83
The case of one, not Christ's disciple, who cast out	
devils in his name	8.4

CHAPTER X.

Question of the Pharisees respecting divorce .	PAGE . 88
Little children brought to Jesus	. 90
The young man whose riches were an obstacle to)
his becoming a disciple	. 93
Jesus foretells that he is to be betrayed, put to	
death, and rise again	. 100
The ambitious request of James and John .	. 102
Jesus restores Bartimæus to sight	. 103
•	ŭ
CHAPTER XI.	
Jesus enters Jerusalem	. 107
Jesus withers a barren fig-tree	. 111
Jesus in the Temple	. 116
CHAPTER XII.	
Parable of the vineyard	. 121
Question of certain Pharisees and Herodians	. 126
Question of certain Sadducees	. 127
Question of one of the Scribes	. 130
Jesus censures the doctrine and the conduct of th	ie .
Scribes	. 133
Jesus commends a poor widow's offering .	. 134
	٠.
CHAPTER XIII.	
Topics of inquiry respecting the Prophecy recorde	d
in this Chanter	7.06

CONTENTS	•				xiii
Time of the prophecy's fulfilment		•			746E
Expressions used in the prophecy					140
Destruction of the temple .					145
The rise of false Christs .					146
Wars and rumours of wars .					147
Earthquakes, famines, and trouble					147
					149
The Gospel preached to all nation	8	•			150
The abomination of desolation s		ıg wl	iere i	it	•
ought not					152
Figurative description of the cha	nge fi	rom t	he ol	d	-
-					153
Whether some portions of the prop	phecy,	whic	h seer	n	
to be applicable to the day	of ju	dgme	nt ca	n	
satisfactorily be reconciled wi	th the	decla	ratio	n	
of Christ respecting the time	of its	fulfil	ment		156
CHAPTER X	IV.				
Jesus anointed for his burial				•	163
Jesus betrayed to the chief priests	J				164
Jesus eats the Passover with the	Fw elv	е			171
Jesus in the garden of Gethseman	е	•			176
Jesus before the Jewish Sanhedrin	m.	•			181
Peter denies Jesus					185

CHAPTER XV.

Jesus before Pilate							189
Jesus before Herod							195
Jesus on his way to				_			196
Jesus on his cross		·	•	•	•	•	190
	• •	•	•	•	•	•	
The ejaculation on the			•	. 1	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	•	200
The two malefactors							203
The witnesses of the					-	-	211
Supernatural occurr	ences	in c	nnec	tion '	with 1	the	
crucifixion	•	. •	•	•	•	•	214
Accomplishment of	prophe	cy at	the c	rucifi	xion		222
The interval between	en the	deat	h of	Jesus	and	his	
resurrection .							226
C	HAP	TER	XV.	ſ.			
Jesus rises from the	dead						230
Jesus appears to Ma	ry Ma	ıgdale	ene				233
Jesus appears to so	me w	omen	on t	heir '	way fi	om	
the sepulchre					•		238
Jesus appears to Pe	ter		•		•		239
Jesus appears to t	wo di	sciple	s on	their	r way	to	
Emmaus .		-					239
Jesus appears to the	eleve	n.					244
Jesus appears again				and	convi	nces	-44
The amount	_ •• •		,		, 24		

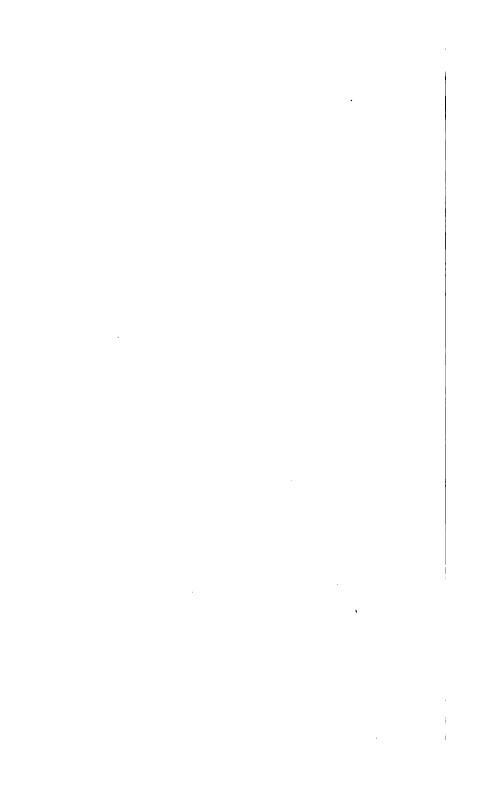
CONTENTS.			xv
Jesus appears to the disciples at the Sea	of Tiber	rias	248
Jesus appears on a mountain in Galile	e, to m	ore	
than five hundred brethren at once			256
Jesus appears to Peter, and also to James	es .		261
Jesus ascends into heaven			262

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,

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CHAPTER I.

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

Ver. 1.

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the meaning in which St. Mark here employs the phrase, was the glad tidings proclaimed by him, and fulfilled in his ministry. Accordingly, a little further on, in this first chapter, our Lord is represented, immediately after his baptism and temptation, as preaching the Gospel, and saying, 'the kingdom of God is at hand.'

Gospel is an old Saxon word, meaning 'good news;' and the title of good news appears to have been affixed to the message of mercy from God to man in Christ, by Isaiah's prophecies,* and by the angel who said to the shepherds of Bethlehem on the night of the nativity, 'I bring you good tidings of great joy.'† It is not, however, uniformly employed in the same sense. Sometimes it is used for the whole of Christianity; sometimes, as in this passage, for our Lord's ministry. It is from the original Greek word, of which Gospel is our translation, that the kindred expressions, Evangelist, Evangelize, Evangelical, are derived.

^{*} Isaiah xl. 9, lii. 7, lxi. 1.

[†] Luke ii. 10.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S OFFICE.

Ver. 2-8.

As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my measenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; and preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

It will be observed that the Jews very readily flocked to John. It is said that 'all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, went out to him.' All Judæa knew that the time specified by the prophets for the Messiah's appearance was come; and were ready to listen to any person who should present himself either as the Messiah, or as Elias, whom they expected to precede the Messiah, agreeably to a prophecy of Malachi.*

Two circumstances respecting John are noticed by St. Mark—his dress and habits of life—his testimony to Jesus.

As Elias, in whose 'spirit and power' he came, lived much in the wilderness, and was often secluded

^{*} Chap. iv. 5.

from public notice, this circumstance in the life of John was probably intended to direct the attention of the Jews to him as the person in whom Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled. Malachi had said that 'Elias should come before the great and terrible day of the Lord, meaning thereby the Elias of the new dispensation, the great prophet of the latter days; even as we should speak of any very distinguished living admiral, as the Nelson of his age.* John wrought no miracles, and made no assertion respecting his claim to be the Elias. It was the more needful, therefore, that even the minutest points of coincidence between Elijah and him should have been brought under notice. If the attention awakened by these points of resemblance had caused the Jews to suspend their judgment, and to wait for further evidence, then their candour and docility would in time have been rewarded. For as John bare witness to Jesus, without performing miracles, so Jesus afterwards bare witness to John, and confirmed his witness by miracles. Accordingly, John did not preach faith, but repent-It was Jesus and the ministers of the Gospel who preached belief; because they, and not John, presented miraculous proofs to their hearers. All that

^{* &#}x27;It is not said by the prophet Malachi, Behold I will send you Elijah the Tishbite, but Elijah the prophet; which, perhaps, might be better rendered a prophet Elijah (an Elijah-like prophet?) So among the Talmudists, any one skilled in signs and languages is called Mordecai, viz., because he is like him who lived in the days of Ahasuerus.'— LIGHTFOOT'S Heb. and Tal. Exercit. on St. Luke, c. i. v. 17.

John's ministry seems designed to accomplish was, 'to prepare the way of the Lord;' to cause men to lend a candid and attentive ear to him, to suspend their decision, and to be ready to admit the force of his miraculous evidence when displayed to them.

The Baptist's testimony respecting our Lord was. that he was mightier than himself: and, that his baptism, instead of being one with mere water, such as his own, was to be a baptism with the Holy Ghost. From this declaration we may infer, that some new connexion with the Holy Ghost is acquired by Christian baptism, such as was derived from no other baptism, no not even John the Baptist's; although 'among them that were born of women there had not arisen a greater than John.'* Accordingly, we read in the Acts, that some whom John had baptized, were re-baptized by St. Paul, in order to make them partakers of this privilege; † and we find our Lord, in his last charge to his apostles, not only commanding them to baptize all nations, but declaring that 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'1 It is not that there is any inherent efficacy in the waters of baptism, nor that it affects us like a medicinal application; but the ceremony is a fulfilment of a condition, which it has pleased the Lord to enjoin on us; and he who complies with that condition 'is saved' or admitted to the blessings and privileges of Christianity, not because he is affected by the water, but

^{*} Matt. xi. 11. † Acts xix. ‡ Mark xvi. 16.

because he has performed a specific act of obedience to Christ. It is 'not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God,' in which, according to St. Peter, the saving efficacy of Baptism consists.*

JESUS BAPTIZED.

Ver. 9-11.

And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

In St. Matthew's Gospel it is mentioned, that when Jesus approached John, to demand baptism of him, John objected, 'saying, I have need to be baptized of thee.' But Jesus told him, 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;' and upon this John baptized him.† If, therefore, it be asked, why our Lord, who had no sins to repent of, and who was himself to impart to mankind the Holy Ghost, should have been baptized, and should have had attached to his baptism the emblem of his union with the Holy Spirit; the proper answer must be that which he himself gave to the scruples of John. It was done 'because thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' He must be regarded in this, and in several other acts of his life, as fulfilling the office of

^{* 1} Pet. iii. 21.

[†] Matt. iii. 14.

pattern to his Church, and to every member of that His mystical body; and as doing, not what was needful for him, but what was needful because 'thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.' He was baptized; and immediately the Holy Spirit descended visibly on him, as if to denote that through baptism, we too should enjoy fellowship with the same Spirit. Hence, in allusion to a similar manifestation attached to the infant Church on the day of Pentecost, he speaks of their being 'baptized with the Holy Ghost,'* the very language of John the Baptist before he baptized the Lord.

Some have supposed that our Lord's baptism was designed to correspond to the washing of the priests, preparatory to their entering on their office, as directed in Exodus xxix. 4; and there is much to be said in favour of this view.

The Holy Ghost, we are told, descended on Him 'like a dove,' not meaning that the appearance was that of a dove, (for that would not have been recognised as the token of divine presence;) but, that the holy light, or 'glory of the Lord,' the established symbol of God's revelation of himself, descended on him, either in shape like a dove, or else with that easy motion with which a dove alights on any object. It was, we may presume, the same brilliant emblem, which, in the form of many tongues, descended on the Church afterwards at the day of Pentecost; and which,

^{*} Acts i. 5 and xi. 16.

in the long series of God's communications with man, had been the chosen sign of His immediate presence. The cherubim that guarded the gate of Eden held a flaming sword; it was out of a burning bush that the Lord first called unto Moses; mysterious lightnings flashed from the summit of Mount Sinai when the law was preparing, as they afterwards struck Saul blind at his conversion; it was a pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the wilderness; and a glorious light that was first attached to their tabernacle, and afterwards abode in their Temple, where God fixed his name. And now, in like manner, when God visited again his people, the Schechinah was lighted in the new temple of Christ's body; enveloped him at the Transfiguration; and lastly descended to fill his new body the church, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the present earthly tabernacle of God.

Together with this visible testimony, a voice was heard from Heaven, declaring Jesus to be the beloved Son of God; by which expression we are taught that he was the Son of God in a peculiar sense. We are made the sons of God by adoption and grace; He and his Father are one.* We are made partakers of God's Spirit; to Him God gave not the Spirit by measure,† in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,‡ and of his fulness have all we received. The unbelieving Jews, accordingly, sought to put him to death

^{*} John x. 30. † John iii. 34. ‡ Col. ii. 9. § John i. 16.

on more than one occasion,* for the blasphemy, as they regarded it, of what he meant by calling God his Father, and himself the Son of God. When brought before Pilate, and Pilate made an effort to save him, 'the Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.'†

JESUS TEMPTED.

Ver. 12, 13.

And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts: and the angels ministered unto him.

The account of our Lord's Temptation is given in detail by St. Matthew and St. Luke. The consideration of the circumstances comprised in this account is not called for, in the view suggested by St. Mark, whose Gospel we are at present taking as our main guide. Still it may be requisite to point out that this event, whether considered briefly or in detail, claims our attention under two different aspects. I. As it was a real and mysterious trial which Jesus underwent in connexion with his office and ministry. II. As it was an example, perhaps a symbol, of our own exposure to temptation, both as a Church and as individuals; and also of our power of resistance through him. Of these two views the last only is immediately practical; the other only so, as it is connected with it.

^{*} John v. 18, and x. 29—36.

[†] John xix. 7.

Throughout our Lord's ministry, indeed, his character and conduct may be considered in this twofold aspect; and it is important that the two views should not be confounded. Of his individual intercourse with the Father; of the mode in which the agency of Satan was directed against him, and was counteracted by him; of all in short that relates to his absolute nature and condition, we are told scarcely anything explicit. What is revealed on this high and mysterious theme is revealed only, it would seem, so far as it may direct and influence us practically in our faith and our The remark applies to the record of the Temptation, as fully as to the rest of our Lord's history. It is only a mystery, in the same sense in which the whole of his life and ministry is a mystery; that is, in reference to the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God, and not to those which are revealed as belonging to us and to our children, that we may do all the words of His law.*

JESUS CALLS SIMON, ANDREW, JAMES, AND JOHN.

Ver. 14-20.

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and

^{*} Deut. xxix. 29.

followed him. And when he had gone a little farther thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

St. Mark, differing, in this respect, from the other evangelists, restricts his narrative to the period of our Lord's actual ministry. He does not, like St. Matthew and St. Luke, make any mention of his birth and childhood; nor does he, like St. John, tell us aught of heavenly things concerning Him, before He was From the account of his born into the world. baptism and temptation, which may be regarded as immediately preparatory to his ministry, the evangelist proceeds to our Lord's first ministerial measure—the call of certain persons, who were to be with him always as witnesses of what was comprised in his ministry, and who were to be commissioned, as his apostles or missionaries, to evangelize the world. Those whom he now called were Simon (afterwards named by him Peter), his brother Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother.

It will be observed that these persons, although designed for a ministry which was eventually to embrace various Gentile nations, even all the world, and not only Judæa or the Jews; were, without any exception, Jews. This may appear, at first, strange, and somewhat at variance with that nice choice of means adapted to every end, which is discoverable in the redemption, not less than in the creation, of the world. But on reflection, we may perceive a reason

for it. Among the first duties of an apostle was that of instructing those to whom he was sent, in the intimate and manifold connexion which subsists between the old and the new dispensation, the former having been preparatory to the latter, the blossom that made way for the fruit. Now it is clear, that, in the then state of the world, this could be done naturally by none but Jews; and miraculous means seem never to have been unnecessarily resorted to.

We further observe that, like those whose appointment is here mentioned, all the apostles, except St. Paul, were from the humbler class of society, and without more education than their creed as Jews The expediency of this, in removing all required. possible suspicion that the propagation of Christianity was owing to human wisdom, is obvious. Accordingly, St. Paul, who is the only exception, continually alludes to those circumstances about his conversion and ministry, which show that his case does not affect the argument. He was the last of the apostles, and therefore could not have contributed his learning and talents to set the scheme on foot; nay, they had been employed to oppose it. His conversion was not the gradual result of reasoning and deliberate study, but of an awful, sudden, and conspicuous act of divine interposition. He retained his natural powers of eloquence and learning after his conversion; but appeals, in common with the others, to the proper credentials of an apostle—the miracles which he wrought. Hence the recurrence of such passages as

these in his writings - which are doubtless not a barren display of humility, but a needful caution. 'Last of all he (i.e., Jesus Christ) was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. fore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.'* 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.'t 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty.'1 'And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God: for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.'&

^{* 1} Cor. xv. 8—11. † 1 Cor. i. 17. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 27. § 1 Cor. ii. 1—5.

Our Lord's manner of addressing those whom he first called to be apostles, ought also to be noticed. He found Simon and Andrew casting a net into the sea; and, in reference to their occupation, he describes their future office as that of fishers of men. kind of figurative language he often used. He made his instruction at once more intelligible and more attractive, by employing metaphors and illustrations drawn from objects present to his hearers, and occurrences which were passing at the time. Thus, in his interview with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. he told her, while she was drawing water, that he had living water; and on the same occasion he spoke to his disciples of the fields being white to the harvest, pointing, no doubt, to the crowds who were returning with the woman from the city to see him, and alluding to the state of the real corn fields which were likewise before their eyes.*

JESUS TEACHING.

Ver. 21, 22.

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

We noticed in the last section one of the characteristics of our Lord's teaching. Another is that he made use of his miracles, not only for the purpose of evidence, but for conveying instruction by hints and

[#] John iv.

The same may be observed of expressive symbols. his custom of teaching by Parables. But it is not to any of these points that the Evangelist alludes, when he describes his hearers as astonished at his 'doctrine' or teaching, and alleges as a reason, that 'he taught as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes.' The novelty and singularity of which he speaks is. that Jesus assumed the office not merely of expounding Scripture, as did all the doctors of the Law. but of making assertions on his own independent authority. The Scribes were accustomed to teach thus, 'It is written,' or 'It is said by them of old time;' but Jesus taught thus, 'I say unto you.' Nor was it by his language only that he made known his claim to independent authority; but by his acts also. he generally conformed to the Jewish law, he occasionally violated it, so as to attract notice to the violation; intimating thereby what he likewise said plainly, 'the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath;'* 'all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.'t

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.

Ver. 23-45.

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were

[#] Mark ii. 28.

[†] Matth. xxviii. 18.

all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves. saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

It has been often remarked, that our Lord's miracles evidence not only divine power, but divine mercy; and

that while Moses and other mere servants of God dealt out alike miraculous kindness and miraculous severity; in the case of the Son of God, the divine interposition was all in unison with the heavenly host's proclamation of 'peace on earth, and good will towards men,' as well as 'glory to God in the highest.'

In the miracles here enumerated by St. Mark, this characterising feature is abundantly apparent. The first objects of Christ's power, are objects of his mercy—the demoniacs, the diseased, and especially those afflicted with that deplorable and loathsome disease, the leprosy.

But this is not the only character which the miracles of Jesus exhibit when compared with those wrought by others. Their didactic use—their application as hints and instructive signs-has been noticed; and besides this very remarkable application of them by our Lord, he sometimes so exercised his miraculous power as to awaken the startling surmise, that he was not only working the works of God, but doing what God had reserved to himself alone. Of this kind was his cure of the lepers. The habitual notions of the Jews associated it with the immediate agency of God Leprosy was believed to be inflicted by a sentence of the Most High. Its removal was connected with a religious ceremony, which denoted that God himself had removed, as he had inflicted it. was under this impression that when Naaman was sent to the king of Israel to be cured of his leprosy, the king of Israel exclaimed, 'Am I God to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?'* When, therefore, our Lord undertook of himself to heal this disease, he not only proved that God worked with him, but indicated that he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and to exercise the divine power which none but the Lord in Heaven had hitherto exercised. So, too, when he cast out devils, he manifested a power over the author of all evil, as inherent in himself, and not merely as a gift.

Another circumstance about these miracles is their conformity to certain prophecies which foretold the Messiah's ministry. Such is this of Isaiah. 'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.'† On this conformity there will be several convenient opportunities of saying more.

The particular cases of miraculous cure here recorded, suggest one further observation. In that of the demoniac—the first of the kind that is mentioned; in that of the many out of whom he afterwards cast out devils; and in that of the leper cleansed; in all these cases he enjoined secrecy, or, at least, forbad the publication of the miracles. He charged the persons healed 'to say nothing to any man,' and he 'suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him.'

This, be it remembered, was the beginning of his

^{* 2} Kings v. 7.

[†] Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

ministry; and his revelations of himself were gradual, and the evidences also, by which the truth of those revelations was supported. He dispensed both truth and evidence, as men could bear the one, and required the other.

CHAPTER II.

JESUS CURES A PALSIED MAN.

Ver. 1-12.

And again he entered into Capernaum after some days: and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press. they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy. Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

OUR Lord had, according to the preceding narrarative, performed various miracles of bodily healing, which, not less than that here recorded, were

specimens of a healing power to be exercised on man's spiritual nature; and suggestive of its being so exer-But the former were the first obscure hints. awakening the attention. Now he is repeating his miracles; and in this, more of that their typical meaning becomes apparent. He now begins to connect pointedly release from bodily infirmity, with a release from spiritual infirmity; thus leading his hearers to a reconsideration of his former miracles, as at once symbolically expressing the doctrine that he was the physician of men's souls, and confirming the truth of it, by the proof they afforded of God being with him. Observe, accordingly, that he first tells the man with the palsy, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee;' and then, when he cures him, expounds, as it were, the hint contained in his miracles of healing, by saying, 'Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?'

JESUS CALLS LEVI, AND EATS WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

Ver. 13-17.

And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphæus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. And when the scribes and pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said

unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, he said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Here is an instance of our Lord's teaching by reference to what was going on in the presence of his hearers, availing himself of something that occurred. or something said in his presence, either to introduce or to illustrate what he had to say. The Pharisees were expressing their surprise that a grave Rabbi should be sitting at a feast with publicans and sinners. Jesus, after reverting to the character of his miracles. observes, that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; not meaning that the world was divided into righteous and sinners, but that all were sinners before God. He so expressed this. apparently, because many were present who were accounted sinners before men also, and because of the remarks made by the Scribes and Pharisees respecting them. If these Scribes and Pharisees had carried their presumptuous arrogance further, and had claimed for themselves, as distinguished from others, the character of angels; he might in like manner have said. 'I came not to call angels but men.' It was an implied rebuke for their assuming a character which did not exist on earth, save in his own person-for all had gone astray, and there was none righteous, no. not one.

JESUS ANSWERS THE QUESTION WHY HIS DISCIPLES DID NOT FAST.

Ver. 18-22.

And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

Fasting is an expression of mourning and sorrow. In our Lord's first reply to the question, why his disciples did not fast, he speaks of it in this point of view, and uses the word as equivalent to mourning. Representing himself as a bridegroom and his disciples as the children of the bridechamber, or bridesmen, he says that it would be unseasonable and out of character for them to exhibit signs of mourning whilst they were in attendance on him. Their period of mourning would come when he should be taken away from them. Compare with these words of our Lord, those recorded in John xvi. 20, 21, 22.

Fasting is also a religious exercise. In his further reply, he speaks of it in this point of view. The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were bound, by the rules of their respective associations, to observe this practice. Jesus says that his body of disciples is one altogether new, and independent of all which had preceded it; and that to attempt to assimilate it to any body of disciples, such as that either of John Baptist, or of the Pharisees, would be like sewing new cloth on an old garment, or putting new wine into old bottles, i. e. old skins, such as were then used for keeping wine, and which were likely to burst as the new wine fermented.

The questioners themselves would seem to have been, some of them disciples of John, some of them disciples of the Pharisees. The first part of his reply may be supposed to have been addressed especially to the former. He calls himself the bridegroom, and his disciples the children of the bridechamber. Under the same image John had spoken of him. 'He that hath the bride,' said John, 'is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this, my joy, therefore is fulfilled.'*

THE DISCIPLES PLUCK THE EARS OF CORN ON THE SABBATH.

Ver. 23-28.

And it came to pass that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not

[#] John iii. 29.

lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Jesus here connects a declaration of his being Lord of the sabbath with an event recorded in the Old Testament, of which the circumstances were somewhat similar. The passage, which will be found in the twenty-first chapter of the first book of Samuel, derives illustration from the twenty-fourth chapter of Leviticus, ver. 9.

The declaration that 'the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath,' was, or ought to have been, intelligible to those, who knew that the strict command of God was, 'Keep my sabbaths.' This property in God's sabbath was now claimed by Jesus, and accordingly his meaning appears to have been in some measure understood, for his enemies watched him closely, in order to observe whether he would give them ground for the charge eventually preferred against him of making himself equal with God. The frequent tests by which they tried his observance of the sabbath, and the importance attached to his most trifling violation of it, must be estimated by reference to this view.

^{*} See Chap. iii.

CHAPTER III.

JESUS CURES A MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH DAY.

Ver. 1-6.

And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.

In considering the miracle here recorded, it will be useful to call to mind the observation made at the close of the preceding chapter. The concert of the Pharisees with the Herodians to destroy Jesus, is very intelligible, if we suppose that his miracle of healing on the sabbath day had confirmed the suspicion, already awakened, that he was assuming the character of Lord of the sabbath. They now felt justified in proceeding against him, because he had not only avowed it, but was acting up to the avowal; he was practically shewing, that his words were to be

construed in a sense which, to their apprehension, was blasphemous.

JESUS CHARGES THE UNCLEAN SPIRITS, NOT TO MAKE HIM KNOWN.

Ver. 7-12.

But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judæa, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumæa, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him for to touch him, as many as had plagues. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

The unclean spirits called Jesus the Son of God. Now it was his object gradually to exercise the faith of his hearers—to prepare them for truth after truth—and he did not, therefore, wish that those should know who he was, whose docility and candour had not been so exercised. Even to his disciples his revelation of himself was gradual. It might also have exposed him to the hazard of an attempt to force on him temporal royalty; and that there was some risk of this may be inferred from his removal into a mountain.

JESUS APPOINTS AND SENDS FORTH THE TWELVE APOSTLES.

Ver. 13—19.

And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained

twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils: and Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphæus, and Thaddæus, and Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him.

Our Lord appointed the twelve, 'that they might be with him;' and so be witnesses of the course of his ministry. Hence they are called emphatically his Witnesses.*

This view of their office is one which deserves to be dwelt on, because it is connected with an important feature of the Christian religion, as distinguished from It is an historical religion; that is, it is a all others. religion whose doctrines arise out of facts; chiefly, miraculous facts. In this respect Christianity essentially differs from all the philosophical systems, or false religions of the world. Even Mahomet only propounded doctrines; but Jesus performed actions out of which doctrines flow. For example, he died for us, and hence the doctrine of the atonement; he sent the Holy Spirit to us, and hence the doctrine of grace. And this will account for our not always finding doctrines with which we are familiar, set forth, as such, in the sacred narratives. They are contained there, yet not as abstract propositions, but as involved in the facts related.

^{*} Acts i. 8.

28 Jesus appoints and sends forth the Apostles.

Our Lord, after appointing the twelve, sent them away from him for a short time; partly, no doubt, for the purpose of spreading his Gospel; partly, perhaps, to give them proof and experience of his assistance in their ministry, when he should be withdrawn from them in the flesh, and present only by the Spirit.*

Two names are recorded as on this occasion given by our Lord to individuals amongst them. Simon was called Peter; † James and John, Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder. Peter is a word signifying 'rock,' and it was applied to the apostle, either to intimate that it was through men like-minded with him, the Church was to be established; ‡ or as a prophecy or promise that he was to be the first stone laid in that spiritual edifice. This was fulfilled in his

* See p. 50.

[†] Cephas was really the name given to Simon; but as this word, in the corrupt Hebrew, in which our Lord and his disciples conversed, meant a stone, the Greek word for a stone, πέτρος, which we render Peter, became in time his more common title. The original name Cephas is preserved in John i. 42, where it is explained by the Greek word πέτρος, "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone," (πέτρος.) It occurs also several times in St. Paul's Epistles. See 1 Cor. i. 12. iii. 22. ix. 5. xv. 5. Galat. ii. 9.

[‡] See Matth. xvi. 13—18. The change, in the original Scripture, from πέτρος to πέτρο would seem to suggest this interpretation. συ εἶ πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτητῆ πέτρο οἰκοδομήσω μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. 'Thou art rock, and on this kind of rock will I build my church.' Peter, it will be remembered, had just replied to the question which Jesus put to the apostles—'Whom say ye that I am ?'—by saying, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.'

being the first who made converts to Christianity. Why James and John were named Boanerges, does not appear from Scripture. Their title might have been designed to indicate the energy for which they would be remarkable in the exercise of the office to which he had called them.

JESUS IS ACCUSED OF BEING BESIDE HIMSELF, AND
OF BEING AN AGENT OF SATAN.

Ver. 19-30.

And they went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said. He hath Beelzebub. and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Both the friends of Jesus and the scribes were unwilling to admit that he was one commissioned by God. The reason was this. The whole nation, with one consent, looked at this time for their Messiah, but made sure of recognizing in him a temporal king. The disciples, even the apostles, continued long under this delusion. But the difference between their case and that of those who rejected him was, that although they could not explain to themselves how his lowly condition was consistent with their view of prophecy, yet they were candid enough not to shut their eyes to the evidence arising from miracles.

The scribes, on the contrary, went so far as to impute these miracles to the agency of Satan; which occasioned our Lord to assert, that 'he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; meaning, that although they may revile him, with some plea, so long as they regarded his actions as merely those of a man, yet, when they perceived his actions to proceed from superhuman agency, and they still reviled, it was God, and not man, they were blaspheming. Their case was hopeless. Even so when Ananias and Sapphira were smitten with death, St. Peter's declaration was, 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.'*

JESUS DECLARES THAT HIS DISCIPLES ARE HIS MOTHER AND HIS BRETHREN.

Ver. 31—35.

There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered

^{*} Acts v. 4.

them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

This is a very striking instance of a characteristic feature in our Lord's teaching, which has been already more than once noticed. Instead of expressing, in any metaphors that chanced to occur to him, those truths, which, from being new or strange, could only be expressed metaphorically, he frequently took his figurative language from present objects and passing occur-He came to be, as Scripture elsewhere expresses it, 'The first-born among many brethren.'* His disciples were to be the Sons of God by adoption.+ There was to be a new relationship between God and man, not natural, but spiritual. The occasion was one which was used for inculcating this new doctrine on those who heard him. Turning from those who told him that his mother and brethren were without, seeking him, and looking on those who were listening to him, 'Behold,' said he, 'my mother and my brethren.' We become his brother and sister and mother by 'being born again,' 'born of God,' t' born of water and of the Spirit,'s and 'putting on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.'|

^{*} Rom. x. 29. † John i. 12, 13. ‡ John iii. 5, 6. § Ephes. iv. || Rom. viii. 15.

CHAPTER IV.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Ver. 1-9.

And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty. and some an hundred. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

THE fields with their various culture and produce—the rich land, the stony ground, and the highway—the ripened corn, the blighted stalk, and the trampled blade, were objects which must have been frequently before the hearers of this parable, perhaps at the time it was spoken. Our Lord frequently illustrates his meaning by reference to them, not in his parables only, but in his other teaching, thus keeping up the impression of his parables.

His lessons were thus more easily connected, and each new one more readily and fully understood, from the familiarity which his hearers acquired with the figurative language so continually used. In this, as in all other respects, the constant hearer enjoyed an advantage over the casual attendant. And this indeed was agreeable to our Lord's declaration, 'to him that hath shall be given,' and in conformity with his practice of explaining his parables only to his disciples. It was their privilege to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE.

Ver. 10-20.

And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables? The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh

unfruitful. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

It appears to have been our Lord's usual practice to explain his parables only to his disciples, leaving others in doubt, if not in ignorance, of their full meaning. The want of education in the class of persons addressed, may account for the fact, that instruction plain enough to us, required in their case explanation.

That he should make this distinction between his hearers, was no proof of any unequal dispensation of truth and mercy; it was but the natural and appropriate reward of docility, humility, and candour. Any of his hearers might have partaken of the privilege by becoming his disciples. Those who came to him, he in no wise cast out.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE INSTRUCTED.

Ver. 21-25.

And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? and not to be set on a candlestick? For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he saith unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.

This declaration follows seasonably the exposition of the parable. The disciples, on being favoured

with this clearer insight into our Lord's meaning, required to be warned, that it was not simply a mark of favour, but a talent, for which they were respon-Their candle was lighted; but woe to them, if they hid it under a bushel, and imparted not that light to others: it was given to them to know the mysteries or secrets of the kingdom of heaven; but it was done, that through them these secrets should be published to the world. They heard what kings and prophets had desired to hear; but the impression to be made on their minds by this was, that of responsibility for the employment of the trust. They were to take heed how they heard. Nay, on their use of each privilege depended their enjoyment of fresh privileges; even as on our use of all our Christian privileges in this world depends our enjoyment of those which are prepared for us in a world to come. 'He that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.'

IMAGES REPRESENTING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

Ver. 26-34.

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of

mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

By the kingdom of God, in this and in most passages of the New Testament, is meant the Church of Christ-the Gospel dispensation. It was called a kingdom, because God's former Church, the Jewish. which it has succeeded and superseded, was, literally. It was distinguished from it by the a kingdom. additional expressions 'of heaven,' and 'of God:' because our divine king governs not his Church, as he did the Jewish, by vicegerents, but is Himself our governor. His residence is in the hearts of the faithful, his laws in the inspired Word, which he has given us. It is so distinguished also, because. agreeably with this change, our covenanted rewards and punishments are not of this world, but hereafter. God 'hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.'*

Our Lord compares the rise and progress of this kingdom to the growth of corn and of mustard seed. The image of the corn growing gradually, and by a secret process, suggests the steady progress of Chris-

^{*} Acts zviii. 31.

tianity, by ways past finding out; the rapid rise and wonderful spread of the mustard plant suggests the contrast between the Gospel in its maturity, and its obscure and humble beginning.

JESUS CALMS THE SEA.

Ver. 35-41.

And the same day, when the even was come, he said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awaké him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

One of the characteristics of Christ's miracles noticed in the early part of these readings was, that they sometimes implied a claim to those attributes, which, from long habit or especial revelation, the Jews ascribed to Jehovah alone. Of this kind was healing the leprosy; and of this kind, perhaps, was the miracle of calming the sea. In the Psalms, the control of the sea is made a frequent and striking image of the exercise of Omnipotence, and the Psalms were the poetry,

^{*} See Psalm lxxvii. 19; xciii. 4.

the light reading, of the nation,—that portion of Jewish literature, with which our Lord's uneducated followers were likely to be best acquainted. National ballads are familiar even to the rudest peasantry; and the psalter comprised the national melodies of the Israelites.

His apostles too, it should be further remarked, belonged to a worldly calling, which made this miracle particularly striking to them. They were fishermen. This very lake was the water on which they pursued their calling. Of all men, they were qualified to decide whether the calming of the storm was according to the course of nature, or miraculous; and of all men, they were most likely to be impressed by the miracle.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS CURES A DEMONIAC, AND PERMITS THE EVIL SPIRITS TO GO INTO A HERD OF SWINE.

Ver. 1-20.

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs: and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said. What have I to do with thee. Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. For he said unto him. Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there, nigh unto the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus. and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

THE miracle here recorded is so far unlike our Lord's miracles generally, which were acts of mercy and kindness, that although it wrought good to the demoniac, it inflicted destruction on the swine, and loss of property on those to whom they belonged. It should be remembered, however, that such a display of divine power might have been as requisite, for warning, as the withering of the barren fig-tree. That betokened the severity of God on unrepentant man; this the terrible power of Satan and his agents, which the Saviour alone can overrule. Look at the condition of the man when possessed with the devil, and the fate of the swine driven by the same possession to perdition; and you see at once an emblem and a specimen of what man's condition would be without a Saviour. Look at the same man, in his right mind, and you have an assurance that 'for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil," and that 'he is able

^{# 1} John iii. 8.

also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'*

THE RAISING OF JAIRUS'S DAUGHTER.

Ver. 21-24. 35-43.

And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, and besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him.-While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entered in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it , and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

It has been questioned, whether the damsel was really dead; or, whether our Lord's expression meant,

[#] Hebrews vii. 25.

not that she was dead, but that she was, literally, asleep, i.e, in a swoon or trance. If her recovery was supernatural, and all agree in this, whether she were recovered from a trance or from death, it was equally a miracle—a proof of superhuman agency. The one is as impossible and as unintelligible to man as the other. Still, looking to the impression which a miracle is calculated to make, the raising from the dead would be always likely to operate on men's minds more strongly than the miraculous cure of sickness. In miracles, there are really no degrees of power which can be measured by us; no divisions or gradations when once the impossible is passed; but the practical effect is as if there were.

And the effect which was produced by this miracle is, accordingly, one reason which would incline one to take the more common view of it, and to suppose that the damsel was raised, not from a trance, but from death. Another reason is, that Jesus selected, as witnesses of the miracle, the three apostles, who were admitted as select witnesses of two other of the most remarkable passages of his life—his Transfiguration, and his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. There seems to be a fitting correspondence with this, in their being called on to be present, at the performance of a miracle so important as that of restoring the dead to life.

But then how are we to understand our Lord's assertion, 'The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth.' In the same manner as when he said, 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go, that I may awake him out

of sleep.'* He appears to have indicated, by this expression in each case, that it was not a *final death*, but one from which the person should recover, before his present connexion with life and this world was interrupted for ever—and in this respect, therefore, resembling sleep. It was a temporary death.

As in the case of many of his other miracles, his tone of voice, perhaps, and manner might have given a further meaning to this expression. It might have aided in conveying a hint—afterwards followed up so as to be intelligible—that death was always henceforward to be considered in a new light—as more like sleep; as a temporary suspension of the energies of mind and body; and that these signal miracles were wrought to prove that it was he, Jesus Christ, who was to remove the suspension.

The New Testament writings show that the disciples learnt from the Lord so to think and so to speak habitually of death. Sleep and sleeping are ordinary terms they use for it. Thus St. Matthew,† in his account of the crucifixion, writes, 'that the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.' In the Acts of the Apostles,‡ St. Paul is described as saying, that 'David, after he had served his own generation, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.' The same apostle makes the same use of the phrase frequently in his Epistles, as in this sentence from the first Epistle to

^{*} John xi. 11. † Chap. xxvii. 52. ‡ Chap. xiii. 36.

the Corinthians,* 'For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.'

JESUS HEALS A WOMAN AFFLICTED WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD.

Ver. 25-34.

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians. and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said. Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and savest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

As in the case of many other of our Lord's miracles of healing, this may have been intended to typify his ministry of spiritual mercy. Such a purpose may be perceived in his words, 'thy faith hath saved thee,' and in the course he took for the manifestation of that faith. He was not dealing out his spiritual privileges indiscriminately, he was not selecting, at random, subjects for his kingdom—but those who had faith to be saved. Hence the striking fact, which

^{*} Chap. xi. 30.

was made as public as possible, that the 'virtue which had gone out of him' followed the manifestation of this woman's faith, as if in accordance with a general rule of his ministry in dispensing mercy. He had not, by word or sign, communicated with her—he had not seen her, for she stood behind him—and yet she had shared in the divine influence with those whom he had called, conversed with, and taught. As if to mark the circumstance more pointedly, after general attention to the fact had been sufficiently excited, he observed emphatically, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.'

This lesson might have been the more requisite, because the object on whom he was proceeding to work a miracle—the damsel who lay dead—was one incapable of any exercise of faith at the time. This miracle, performed while he was on his way to her, became a preparatory warning against drawing a wrong inference from the circumstance. To strengthen the impression, he expressly requires that the damsel's friends, who were capable of faith, although at the time she was not, should believe. His words to her father are, 'Be not afraid, only believe.'

Even so parents and sponsors now, when they present infants to the Lord, in baptism, for his spiritual mercies, make that profession which the infants are incapable of making. Even so we trust that He will embrace those little ones with the arms of his mercy, and will give unto them the blessing of eternal life.

CHAPTER VI.

JESUS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

Ver. 1-6.

And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

MUCH of our Lord's ordinary life must, doubtless, have partaken of the character of other men's lives. This, connected with the knowledge of his earthly birth and parentage, seemed irreconcileable with the notion which the ancient people of God had formed for themselves of their expected Messiah. Their mistake, and the consequences to which it led, ought to be a warning to us, not to frame theories respecting the measures of divine wisdom, and to try those measures afterwards by these theories.

That portion of our Lord's history, however, which

was unconnected with his ministry has not been Had it been ordered otherrecorded in Scripture. wise, the record might have led us into error scarcely less mischievous than that of the Jews-the error of attributing an extraordinary character to these, as wellas to the parts of his life which were really entitled to Like his countrymen, we should have been unwilling to see anything in the actions, words, or person of Immanuel which was not extraordinary-extrahuman—a part of his ministry—a portion of his doctrine—a feature of his example. It is impossible to calculate the extent of the superstitious practices which might have been founded on a description of his dress, for instance, his hours of rising and going to rest, and the like, if these matters had formed part of the inspired histories. The contrast exhibited, in this respect, between Scripture and those writings which profess to tell us things omitted by Scripture, is of itself a proof that the former is God's work, the latter man's; and the wisdom of God is justified by the mischief which has been actually produced through credence given alike to that which is written and that which is not written in the volume of His Book.

One statement in this passage of St. Mark requires to be noticed. It is said that Jesus 'could there do no mighty work.' Now we know abundantly from other parts of Scripture, that 'God gave not the Spirit to him by measure,'* that 'in him dwelt all the

^{*} John iii. 34.

fulness of the Godhead bodily,'* and that 'God in Christ'† must have been omnipotent. When it is said, therefore, that he could do no mighty work, it cannot be meant that he had not the power to do it, but that it was incompatible with the rule of his ministry—that, granting that rule to be unbroken, it was impossible.

In like manner, we may say that God cannot act unwisely, unjustly, and the like; meaning thereby, not that His ability or power is restricted, but that it would be inconsistent with his attributes as revealed to us. So, too, we say, even of an upright man, that he is incapable of a vicious or base action. In the present instance, the circumstance which rendered it incompatible with our Lord's established course of ministry, and in that sense impossible, for him to perform many miracles, was the want of faith described in the preceding verse. For even the sick were not usually healed without possessing this qualification; and accordingly, he sometimes tells them that it is their faith that has made them whole.

JESUS SENDS FORTH HIS APOSTLES IN PARTIES OF TWO TOGETHER.

Ver. 7-13.

And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; and commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no

^{*} Coloss. ii. 9; i. 19.

^{† 2} Cor. v. 19.

bread, no money in their purse: but be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

The first and most obvious reason for this early mission of the apostles seems to have been that they should spread abroad the good tidings of Christ and his miracles, and baptize those who received and believed their report. And yet, it is certain, that so far from requiring his apostles generally to be the heralds and preachers of these his sayings and doings, our Lord was continually imposing secresy on them. The natural course of his ministry seems rather to have required his interposition to check the indiscriminate spreading of his fame, than to encourage and command it. All was soon to be made known, and 'proclaimed on the house-tops;' but, as yet, it was, in some measure, a secret, whispered in the ear, and confined to the closet. To the disciples only it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; to the unheeding multitude he spake in parables. Why then this mission of the apostles to preach and to perform miracles?

It was not simply the publication of his miracles and of the truths which they attested that he was

wont to forbid; but the injudicious, irregular, indiscriminate publication of them. What he laboured to prevent was the casting of his pearls before swine, the scattering of his good seed where there was no soil. Such a mission as this of the apostles, divided into six parties, might have been requisite in order to give an opportunity to men everywhere of hearing the offer of salvation, of witnessing the miraculous testimony of its being from God, and thus of becoming his disciples. The apostles, in fulfilling this mission, were, no doubt, to exercise a discrimination not less strict than that which the Lord observed in his own ministry.

Another very important object, however, presents itself, as connected with this mission of the apostles, during his lifetime. It might have been designed to give them a foretaste and experimental proof of his spiritual presence, support, and guidance of them, when, after his ascension, they should be permanently separated from his presence in the flesh; even as Moses and Aaron, in their mission to Pharaoh, went through a probation, and acquired a practical assurance of God's miraculous assistance, before they were called on to undertake the adventurous task of conducting the Israelites out of Egypt and through the wilderness. No situation is conceivable which would more require a provision of this sort—a confidence founded on actual experience of support and guidance by their unseen Lord-than the situation of the apostles, when called on to begin their ministry, after

that he had ceased to be manifested in the flesh. It is true, that the miraculous strengthening of the promised Comforter might (as we suppose) have been made sufficient to supersede the need of all this precaution; but it is equally true, that this assistance does not, in the course of their ministry, seem to have been designed to supersede the acquirement, by ordinary means, of qualifications for their duty; but only to accomplish that for which such qualifications were inadequate.

The whole arrangement of the embassy on which the apostles were now sent, favours this view. Every circumstance was so ordered, as to awaken in them, throughout this journey, a sense of miraculous support from their absent Master. They were to take no provision—no clothes—to claim shelter and hospitality without scrip or purse—to heal the sick, and to cast out devils. When the period approached, too, for the final separation, for which they had been thus prepared, he reminds them of all this, in order that the effect intended by it might not be lost on them: 'When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?'*

The cure of the sick seems, from this account, to have been performed through the ceremony of anointing. It gave rise to the practice of anointing the dying, observed in the Romish Church—a practice which is now superstitious, because the miraculous

Luke xxii. 35.

efficacy attached to it, for a time, by divine appointment, has manifestly been withdrawn.

DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Ver. 14-29.

And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:)—and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to

the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

In so concise a history as that of each Evangelist, we are led to expect no more account of John the Baptist than has reference to Jesus and his Gospel. Accordingly, the mention of John is occasional, and forms nothing like a connected narrative. He is only introduced to our notice as proclaiming the Lord's approach, baptizing him, and bearing testimony to him.

The more detailed narrative of his birth, and here also of his death, is no exception to the rule which probably guided the sacred penmen in selecting their notices of him. They record minutely not only the circumstances of his birth and parentage, but of his death; as if in contrast with the corresponding portions of the history of Christ. In our Lord's case, each of these periods had been especially marked by the finger of prophecy; and it might have been expedient, not only to testify that these prophecies had been fulfilled in Jesus; but also, that they had not been fulfilled in the other great personage who appeared with him, and whose appearance had occasioned in some a surmise that he was the Messiah.* In accordance with this supposition, St. Luke, who details the circumstances of our Lord's birth and parentage, relates also the birth and parentage of

^{*} John i. 19.

John, whilst St. Mark, whose Gospel contains the narrative of the crucifixion, but not that of the nativity and parentage of the Saviour, records the death only of John.

JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND PERSONS WITH FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISHES.

Ver. 30-44.

And the Apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven. and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they

took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

This was one of the many miracles which furnished not only evidence that God was with Jesus, but that he was one with God. These miracles evince such a design, from their being plainly identified with some portion of that agency, which Jehovah was known to have reserved as his peculiar and immediate province—some act which was referred directly to Him, and not to Him through the ministry of his servants. Jehovah had given the Israelites manna-Jesus gives the multitude miraculous food. Jehovah does it in the wilderness—in the wilderness, too, Jesus performs the miracle.* To those, therefore, who had understanding to receive the hint conveyed by this miracle, his claim must have seemed the same, as it did to the Pharisees, when they heard him assert, that the Son of man was lord of the sabbath.

This miracle had, we know, the effect of producing an attempt to make him a king, and was the cause of his retiring to a mountain. This fact we learn from St. John.† But it does not therefore follow, that all looked on our Lord's marvellous act in precisely the light in which the preceding remarks place it. Many might have considered it only as affording proof of his power to support an army miraculously, and be led forthwith to hail him confidently as the Messiah;

^{*} See John vi. 26-35.

[†] Chap. vi. 15.

supposing, as indeed all the Jews did, that the Messiah was to be a temporal prince.

JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA.

Ver. 45-52.

And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida. while he sent away the people. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: for they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Among the characteristics of Jehovah's power, especially in the language of the Psalms, no one is more prominent than His control of the sea. Sacred literature being the only literature of the Jews, and the Psalms being, as was natural, the more popular portion, these passages must have been familiar to all in a humble walk of life; but most familiar, and most interesting, to men whose employment was on the sea. The apostles, therefore, may be supposed to have seen Jesus walking on the sea, with an impression beyond

that which might have been made by another miracle. The act was, doubtless, associated in their minds with many a pious meditation in which they had indulged, while toiling peaceably with their nets, or struggling against the storm. How often must they have called to mind the language of inspiration! 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters.' 'The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea than the mighty waves of the sea.'* How often must their hearts and lips have appealed to Him, as the only Being who could avert their perils, and bless their labours!

The words of Jesus to them, while performing the miracle, would be likely to confirm any such spontaneous suggestions; and were doubtless designed to do so. In the original they are, 'Be of good cheer, I AM.'† Now I AM was the title which Jehovah had given to himself when he sent Moses to the Israelites. 'And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.'‡ Accordingly, when Jesus made use of the same expression to the Scribes and Pharisees, and told them,

^{*} Psalm lxxvii. 19; and xciii. 4. † Θαρσείτε, έγώ εἰμι. ‡ Exodus iii. 13, 14.

'Before Abraham was I AM,' they considered it blasphemy, and would have stoned him forthwith, had he not hid himself.*

JESUS IS POPULAR.

Ver. 53-56.

And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, and ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

From the eagerness here displayed to receive the benefit of Christ's miraculous agency, it appears that the sensation which must have been created by the miracle of the loaves and fishes did not immediately subside. It is probable, that in this, as in many other instances, persons were convinced by the miracles, who afterwards fell off from the faith. 'Many of his disciples,' on one occasion, 'went back, and walked no more with him;'† and this was, doubtless, the condition of numbers. 'Ye are they,' said our Lord to his apostles towards the close of his ministry, 'who have continued with me in my temptations.'\(\frac{1}{2}\) Where belief was felt and professed, the danger and trial were not past. It was requisite that our Lord should pray for

^{*} John viii. 58, 59. † John vi. 66. † Luke xxii. 28.

Peter, who had been foremost in confessing him to be the Christ, that his faith might not fail him. The Devil, then, as now, was ready to pluck the word out of the heart of the unimproving believer—to make the last state of many worse than the first.

CHAPTER VII.

JESUS EXPOSES THE PERVERSION OF THE LAW BY THE PHARISEES.

Ver. 1-23.

Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees. and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him. Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them. Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do, they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ve hold the tradition of men. as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that we may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whose curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ve say. If a man shall say to his father or mother. It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them. Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: there is

T the time of our Saviour's coming into the world, the teachers and guides of the Jewish nation had perverted the Law of Moses by means of their traditions. Through this method of expounding Scripture they had made the Word of God of none effect; first, by considering the forms and ceremonies of the Jewish dispensation as an ultimate end, and effectual in themselves, without reference to the morality and true inward religion which they were designed to aid, and keep up: secondly, by obscuring and destroying the prophetic picture exhibited in them, whereby our Lord was to be recognized when he came as their promised Messiah. Hence their obstinate blindness to his miracles, and their persevering expectation of a temporal ruler and deliverer.

The origin of these traditions is uncertain. They appear to have been the gradual accumulation of commentaries, originally, perhaps, useful and judicious,

but, in time, mixed with bolder and more independent speculations, as the temptation to introduce them became greater, from the increased authority of traditional law. They bear a very close analogy to the traditions of the Romish Church.

Many allusions are found in the Evangelists to the observance of this traditional religion, which constituted the Pharisaical claim to superior righteousness. Of those contained in the passage now read, the only one which requires explanation is the evasion of the duty of supporting a parent, by saying, that the means which you would otherwise employ for that purpose were corban, or a gift to God. It appears to have been a practice with those who were unwilling to support their parents, to dedicate their property—to make a sort of reversion of it—to the service of God; which, by the sanction of the traditional comments on their Law, left them free to use it for themselves whilst it remained in their own hands.

Concerning the effect of the outward piety which tradition allowed to be substituted for inward holiness, it deserves to be noticed, that tradition was thereby not only a cause why the Messiah was not recognized; but presented a strong obstacle to the reception of the evangelical tenets. Of Christ's preaching, the very foundation doctrine was that of the atonement. Now to men, who, like the Pharisees, were accustomed, by laborious and exact external observances, to be in their own eyes, in the eyes of others, and, as they thought, in the sight of God, laying up in store enough, and

more than enough of merit, and advancing, day by day, from superior to supreme holiness, nothing could be more mortifying and unacceptable than the doctrine of the atonement. To be told that all, even the best, required the sacrifice of the Son of God for the remission of sins; that their pardon was a gift, not a right; that, as sinners, not as righteous men, they were invited into the kingdom of their Messiah; was a view of that glorious period and personage from which they at once averted their eyes. Heavier burthens than those to which they already submitted they would have borne; but to be told that these burthens were worse than useless, was intolerable.

JESUS CURES A SYROPHŒNICIAN WOMAN'S DAUGHTER.

Ver. 24-30.

And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

What is most observable in this miracle is, that the object of the Saviour's mercy was not only a Gentile,

64 Jesus cures a Syrophænician woman's daughter.

but one of the impious and impure race of Canaan.*

The delay which he made before performing it, as well as his declarations and hints, were, probably, intended to direct the attention of the by-standers to this circumstance, and thereby to convey to them his first notice of the conversion of the Gentiles.

Two points about the probable origin and nature of this woman's faith deserve to be noticed.

The first is contained in the terms of her address to Jesus, which are omitted by St. Mark, but will be found in St. Matthew's narrative. † Her words were, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.' Now this denotes that the woman was acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures-probably was a proselyte of the gate, or devout Gentile: and that, from these Scriptures, she. by candid and patient inquiry, had learnt enough to recognize in Jesus the promised Messiah. Possibly she may have discovered, what the Pharisees and scribes could not, the true meaning of David's words. 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.'1 may, even in the spirit of those words, have called on the son of David, as David's Lord and her Lord.

The faith, however, which was most striking in her case, and which was directed to a truth long hid from the apostles themselves, was that David's Lord and Son was to be a Saviour, not for the Jews only, but

^{*} See Bp. Horsley's Sermons, Serm. xxxvii. and xxxviii. † Chap. xv. 22. ‡ Luke xx. 41—44.

for the Gentiles also. How had she learnt this? How was it that this woman perceived in God's word a meaning which was hidden from the wise and learned? How was it that she was brought to Jesus by those same Scriptures which led others to reject him? Thus much we know—the opening of the understanding to understand the Scriptures cometh not by learning and mere cultivation of the intellectual powers. It is the gift of God. It is given to those who humble themselves before the Lord. So did this woman. It is given to those who pray and faint not. So prayed she. Affliction prepares us for it; and it was under a heavy dispensation of Providence that she was taught. Many there be, we trust, in every age, who are thus made wise unto salvation.

JESUS CURES ONE WHO WAS DEAF, AND HAD AN IMPEDIMENT IN HIS SPEECH.

Ver. 31-37.

And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it; and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

The expression this miracle called forth, 'he hath done all things well,' must be interpreted of our Lord's duly fulfilling the prophetic marks of the Messiah. Of these, none could have been more known than that, according to Isaiah, he was to cure the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and the lame.* That he should perform the miracle where the multitude could not see it, and even forbid its being published, may have been because the time was not yet come for so full a declaration of himself.

^{*} Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUS FEEDS ABOUT FOUR THOUSAND PERSONS WITH SEVEN LOAVES AND A FEW SMALL FISHES.

Ver. 1-21.

In those days, the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks. and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came into the parts of Dalmanutha. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And he charged them. saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

HOR the instruction of his disciples, as well as for the relief of the multitude, Jesus, a second time, performs the miracle of feeding numbers with a few loaves and fishes in a desert place; and follows it up with a hint to them, to avoid the prejudiced view of God's dealings and promises exhibited in the conduct of the Pharisees. A connexion between the caution and the miracle is indicated by the words, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.' The particular prejudice which they, on this occasion, betrayed, was that of being content with no sign, but the appearance of the Messiah in the sky. This thev were led to expect by interpreting literally a figurative description of the Messiah's coming, which is contained in the book of Daniel.* It was one of the many mistakes, into which the Jews fell, under the teaching of their blind guides. Hence the severe rebukes with which he follows up a miracle, the effect of which, he knew, would be neutralized, in so many instances, by 'the leaven of the Pharisees.'

^{*} Daniel vii. 13.

JESUS GIVES SIGHT TO A BLIND MAN.

Ver. 22-26.

And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

This miraculous cure of a blind man had an apparent allusion to the intellectual blindness, even of our Lord's disciples, which was noticed in the last section. In reference to this he had asked them, 'Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Twelve. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?' The slow and gradual way, too, in which his miracle of healing the bodily infirmity of the blind man was performed, makes it the more apt type of his removing intellectual and spiritual blindness. first, the blind man looks up, and sees men as trees walking; and it is only in a further stage of the miracle that he sees plainly. Nothing, perhaps. more required to be impressed on their minds, than that while Jesus was commending their faith, and rewarding it by clearer and clearer revelation, they

were still to be on the alert about discovering the whole truth—that their faith, until they should arrive at the perfect man, was even like the slow-coming vision of this blind man restored to sight, and the objects of it like the men whom he saw 'as trees, walking.'

PETER CONFESSES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST.

Ver. 27-38.

And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he said unto them, But whom say ve that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him. Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou sayourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed. when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

From this passage we find that the cure of the blind man was followed up by questions from our Lord to his apostles respecting their faith in him, and a freer communication of light to them, 'He spake that saying openly.' The need of the lesson conveyed by the miracle is here fully exemplified in Peter's behaviour, even with all the striking admonitions and reproofs yet sounding in his ears. 'Whom say ye that I am?' asked Jesus. Was he John the Baptist? as some supposed. Elias? as others thought. One of the prophets? according to a third surmise. 'Thou art the Christ,' exclaimed Peter. were opened, and he saw-but what? Only, as it were, the blind man's first imperfect vision-the objects of faith confused and indistinct. covered thus much, that his Master was the Christ; but when the discourse turned on other features of the scheme of redemption, no less essential in the prophetic picture—when Jesus talked of the Son of man suffering-being rejected by the chief priests and elders—put to death—and rising on the third day he could see nothing of all this. His mind, like the eyes of the blind man gradually acquiring sight, embraced a view of the Messiah, which was only partial, and in shadowy outline. He interrupted our Lord, and forbad him to proceed; and drew on himself the harsh rebuke, 'Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.'

One inference there is which we may draw from

this—that, although faith was made a requisite preparatory to all the blessings of the new dispensation, yet this faith has by no means always had the same object. And how could it? To him that had more was to be given. Faith, according to the light afforded, was requisite at baptism; but the baptized afterwards had their eyes continually opened to fresh truths; every new one being a reward of the faith exercised on the preceding object which had been presented to it. Is it not so even now? Who shall say, under his particular circumstances, what faith will be necessary for his salvation? That which qualified the leper for being healed was faith, faith in our Saviour; but if that faith was never enlarged, a worse thing was likely to come upon him. Peter's acknowledgment of our Lord, that he was the Christ, was faith, and faith in Christ; but what was then commended in the apostle would have been, we have reason to think, insufficient for his salvation, had he, under his after circumstances, never advanced beyond it. must have had faith in Christ; else he would not have followed him so constantly; but his faith did not advance and keep pace with his circumstances; and he, we know, perished. That view again, which was great and glorious for John the Baptist, was blindness, and like the imperfect sight of him who saw men, as trees, walking, in one of the least in the kingdom of heaven. Let every one, therefore, examine himself not only to ascertain whether he is in the faith, but whether that faith embraces as much religious knowledge as may be expected of him.

CHAPTER IX.

JESUS FORETELLS THAT SOME THEN PRESENT SHOULD LIVE TO SEE THE COMING OF HIS KINGDOM.

Ver. 1.

And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

No part of our Lord's prophetic language has more perplexed interpreters than his expressions concerning his speedy coming. Even in the inspired age, we find, from St. Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians,* that the apostles themselves, by adopting the same language, raised expectations in some, which it was requisite afterwards to correct and qualify. In later times, the obvious defect of a fulfilment of these promises, in the sense which might otherwise be attached to them, has led to a twofold interpretation of them. The difficulty is met by supposing that, in the less obvious meaning of these words, Christ has come, and his kingdom has been established; whilst, in a more literal and a more perfect sense, he is yet to come and to reign.

Accordingly, in the present prediction, commen-

^{*} Chap. 2.

tators generally agree, that the coming of the Lord's kingdom with power, alluded to the destruction of Jerusalem; and identify with this the promise recorded elsewhere, as made to St. John especially, that he should tarry until his Lord should come.* The fact that St. John survived that event, and that the event itself has an importance which may account for its being denoted by the expression of 'the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,' are very plausibly alleged in support of this view.

And yet, with respect to the application of the 'sign of the Son of man in heaven,' to the destruction of the holy city, it may be questioned whether we are altogether warranted in so readily adopting it. Our Lord, in his use of the words, certainly has reference to the event; but it is more accordant with the truth, and at least equally so with his language, to suppose that the destruction of Jerusalem was not the object of his coming, but the sign that he had come; inasmuch as it involved the abolition of the Temple service, and thereby supposed the establishment of a new dispensa-In that new dispensation the Lord has come to us, through the coming of the Holy Ghost, who is one with him and with the Father. God's kingdom is now spiritual, the divine presence in it spiritual, the exercise of divine power spiritual. This, accordingly, is our Lord's mode of speaking respecting 'I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto

[#] John xxi. 22, 23.

you.' 'If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'* So too St. John, in hailing the final establishment of that kingdom into which it had been granted him to see his Lord so come, exclaims, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'†

JESUS IS TRANSFIGURED.

Ver. 2-8. 11-13.

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow: so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.—And they asked him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And he answered and told them. Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever thou listed. as it is written of him.

By connecting the narrative of this mysterious event with the passages immediately preceding, some probable view may be given of its object, considered as a part of the Saviour's ministry.

^{*} John xiv. 10 and 23.

[†] Rev. xxii. 20.

In the preceding chapter,* we read of the disciples reporting to Jesus the various conjectures abroad respecting him—that he was John Baptist raised from the dead—Elias—one of the prophets. Now of these floating rumours, there were two which had their foundation in Scripture. Before the coming of the Messiah, Elias was, according to Malachi's prediction, destined to visit Israel, and to restore all things.† Again, the coming of the Messiah himself was represented as the raising up of one like unto Moses;‡ and this is alluded to in the expression 'that prophet,' or 'the prophet.'

It is not unlikely, indeed, that, joining the prophecy with the recorded fact that there was a mystery about the sepulture of Moses, and that no one was permitted to know where his body was, the Jews might have supposed Moses, like Elias, to have been taken up into heaven, and, like him, designed to be restored to them on the restoration of their theocracy. To correct this, or misinterpretations of prophecy like this, might have been one purpose of the Transfiguration. Peter had evinced faith enough when the apostles were asked, 'And whom say ye that I am?' to reply, 'the Christ;' but it by no means followed that this confusion of thought was removed even from

^{* 21—28. †} Chap. iv. 5, 6. † Deut. xviii. 15. § Deut. xxxiv. 6.

If 'The Jews have a fiction that Moses shall come with Elias, when Elias himself comes.'—Lightfoot on Luke ix. 30, who traces it in Nahum i. 3.

his mind. To improve then, as well as to reward, his incipient faith, and the faith of the other apostles, Elias and Moses were miraculously exhibited to their view. This must have convinced them, that Elias did not really come in the person of John the Baptist, any more than that Jesus was only Moses revived; and hence the question that followed the spectacle, 'Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?' Hence, too, as Jesus could now apply the prophecy to John without danger of misapprehension, he tells them, that in his coming the prophecy was fulfilled.

But the more important object of the vision seems to have been, not that which warned the apostles against identifying John with Elias, or Jesus with Moses, but that which confirmed Peter's assertion that Jesus was the Christ. A change came over the Lord, 'he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.' This mysterious brightness was the shechinah—the glory of the Lord -the well-understood emblem of divine manifestation. On two favoured servants of God this mark of His presence was known to have rested, and on two only -on Moses after he came down from Mount Sinai, and his face so shone that he wore a veil; * on Elias, or Elijah, when he was borne away from mortal sight seated on a cloud so irradiated.† By these marks, the disciples may have recognized Moses and Elias, whom

^{*} Exodus xxxiv. 33.

^{† 2} Kings ii. 11.

they had never seen, but with whom, so characterized. their Scriptures made them acquainted. They now saw them 'in glory'—to these servants of God, even as to Jesus, the shechinah was attached. Were thev then Immanuels too? 'Let us make three Tabernacles. one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. Were Moses and Elias to be considered as Beings of the same order as their Master? Not so. 'This,' said the voice from the cloud, 'is my beloved Son, hear him.' Twice to our Lord this glory had been attached, and on each occasion that same voice accompanied it. as if to guard against the possibility of its being supposed to denote no more than in the case of Elias or Moses. This must have been one great purpose of the Transfiguration. It declared Jesus to be, not like Elias, or like Moses, an inspired man - but the Immanuel—the Christ—the anointed with the Holy Ghost-the Son of God.* And hence its place in the sacred narrative is immediately after the Lord's conversation with the apostles about the rumours afloat concerning him, and Peter's confession that he was the

^{*}This expression must be interpreted by reference to a common Hebrew idiom, the application of which was very wide, and extended alike to inanimate and animate objects. Thus, Isaiah xxi. 10,—'O my threshing, and the corn of my floor,' is in the original, 'the son of my floor.' On this principle we meet with 'the son of perdition,' 'the son of peace,' 'the sons of disobedience,' and the like. The analogous expression of the Son of God can only in fairness be interpreted in like manner to mean a divine man—an Immanuel.

Christ. Hence, too, it is followed up by the same injunction as that confession, that they should not make him known publicly. Hence, too, it seems to have led, as in the former case, to hints of his death and resurrection.

That the apostles, however, should, at first, have considered it as the opening scene of God's new kingdom, and have therefore suggested the erection of the three tabernacles, is natural when we look back to the discourse of our Lord which had but just before taken place, respecting his 'coming in the glory of his Father,' and his promise that some present should witness it during their natural lives.

THE IMPRESSION MADE ON THE APOSTLES BY OUR LORD'S PREDICTION OF HIS BETRAYAL, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION.

And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean.—And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him.

This scruple of the apostles, respecting the predicted betrayal, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is easily understood, when we remember that, even after his

80 The impression made on the apostles, &c.

death, they continued to dwell on the prophecies respecting his kingdom, as if that kingdom were to be a temporal one. His declaration to them was so plain and circumstantial, that it was impossible, we might suppose, for them to misunderstand or doubt it. told them, that he was to be betrayed, to be put to death, and to rise again the third day. 'But they understood not that saying.' Why not? Because if this were so, what was to become of his kingdom, and its glory, and its power? and what was to become of them and their share in that power and glory? might easily have had their doubts resolved by asking him to explain his words; but they 'were afraid to ask him.' Why were they afraid? Conscious of the unworthy motives which made them desire to have his words, not explained, but explained away, they durst not put the question to one, to whom, as they had learned by experience, the very secrets of their hearts were known. Is this Scripture no rebuke to any of us? Is there no truth as plainly set forth in God's word, which we are afraid to face and search into, because, unless the words admit of being explained away, it would oblige us, in the strong language of the Lord Jesus, to pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, which are our offence -the stumbling block in the way of our faith or our obedience?

JESUS CURES A CHILD POSSESSED BY A DUMB SPIRIT.

Ver. 14-29.

And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him. And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them? And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me. And they brought him unto him; and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming. And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him. If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out. and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him un: and he arose. And when he was come into the house. his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he saith unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

Other similar miracles are recorded of our Saviour, and have been already sufficiently the subject of remark, for us to omit all that applies to this in common with them: as, for instance, that it may be classed among those which were typical of a moral cure of the heart, when labouring under a dumbness and a deafness, worse than the bodily infirmity inflicted by Satan; or again, that it was performed in a way to denote the real agency of the Devil, and to prove that Jesus, by expelling him from his dominion over men's bodies, was both willing and able to save to the uttermost, even from his dominion over the soul, those who came unto him.

What I should select as the peculiar and characteristic feature in this, is contained in the assertion, 'this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.' These words seem to convey a hint of the essential difference between our Lord and his apostles and followers, even when both were performing similar miracles. And indeed, as the multitudes soon saw his followers performing the same mighty works as himself, both during his lifetime, and after his death, and (if the promise he made was fulfilled) even greater than these;* some such caution might have been continually requisite, and might have been given from time to time, although not left on record. In the present instance, the failure of the apostles in an attempt to do that, which they might have effected had they used the prescribed form of prayer and fasting, shewed that the gift of the Spirit was in their

[#] John xiv. 12.

case circumscribed, and its efficacy made to depend on their observance of these requisite conditions. Our Lord forthwith, without prayer, without fasting, without these preparatory conditions which he declared to be requisite, performs the miracle. What was the natural inference? That 'God gave not the Spirit to him (as to others) by measure,'* and subject to limitations. Their miraculous power was given conditionally. 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'t He had only to say the word, and the sick man was healed, the devils were cast out, and the dead were raised.

THE TWELVE DISCUSS THE QUESTION, WHO WAS TO BE FIRST AMONG THEM, AND HAVE THEIR NOTIONS OF PRIORITY CORRECTED BY JESUS.

Ver. 33-37.

And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and said unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.

This discussion of the question, who was to be first amongst the apostles, appears to have been occasioned by our Lord's preceding declarations respecting the

^{*} John iii. 34.

[†] See chap. xi. 24.

speedy establishment of his kingdom, and, connected with it in their view, by the Transfiguration, which three of them had witnessed. Although assured that that glorious scene was not the commencement of his promised reign, they regarded it, probably, as denoting the near approach of it. It is worthy of remark, that our Lord did not wait for any expression to fall from them on this occasion, which might give him a clue for correcting their erroneous expectations; but, contrary to his usual method, himself extorts from them the working of their minds, and by a beautiful and expressive symbol, and one which long formed a favourite image in his language, checked their ambitious notions.

THE CASE OF ONE NOT CHRIST'S DISCIPLE WHO CAST OUT DEVILS IN HIS NAME.

Ver. 38-50.

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said. Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having

two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

This incident ought, perhaps, to be considered in connexion with the failure of the apostles to cast out a devil, which is recorded in the former part of the chapter, and as a renewal of the same lesson. not unlikely that the stranger had tried the effect of observing such preparatory requisites as our Lord had declared necessary; and that his trial had been permitted to succeed, partly for evidence to improve his own faith; but still more, with a view of renewing, in the minds of the apostles, the impression made by their failure. It would naturally present itself to their thoughts in a reflection of this form. 'We who are his commissioned and chosen followers, by neglecting the appointed means, fasting and prayer, failed to perform the miracle of casting out a devil; and here is one. who is not yet in the train of our Master's followers, and who, nevertheless, by duly observing these conditions, has succeeded. Let us and others, then, beware of supposing our Lord's power and ours to be the same. His is independent, and his own; ours derived from him, and subject to the rules which He has enjoined for its exercise.'

86

Beyond this, the primary intent, if the above suggestion be right, for which our Lord permitted the stranger to perform the miracle of casting out devils in his name, it served, incidentally, as an occasion for repeating another lesson which he had also lately given them. Ever since his Transfiguration, and his plain statement respecting the near approach of his kingdom, their ambitious views became more and more apparent. They were now congratulating themselves on the place they held as the chosen attendants of the future monarch, and even disputing amongst themselves about priority. They were jealous of the stranger, who, at this critical moment, was presuming to assume a part like theirs. The remarks of our Lord, with which this chapter concludes, appear to have an especial reference to this state of mind in his apostles. They conveyed to them a solemn warning, against throwing any impediments in the way of those who were likely to join them, as candidates for his favour, and partakers of his free grace. By way of reminding them of former lessons, in which he had taught them what manner of spirit they were of, he connects his present admonition with that which he before gave them, when they, as now, disputed amongst themselves for priority. For this purpose, apparently, he introduces into his language the image of a child—the symbol which he had on that occasion adopted. At that time he had set a child in the midst of them; he now recalls the lesson to their minds, and connects it with the present by the

metaphor he uses, 'Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.' The various strong figures, by which he exhorts them to sacrifice their dearest and most cherished prejudices, rather than fail in this respect, may, perhaps, have been in like manner connected with some expressive action or word which is not recorded. Their meaning however, and its connexion with the reproof, is plain—his apostles were the salt of the earth; their rewards were to be proportioned to their alacrity in spreading that society which they seemed desirous to circumscribe—in removing, not in creating, scruples.

CHAPTER X.

QUESTION OF THE PHARISEES RESPECTING DIVORCE.

Ver. 1-12.

And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judges by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them. For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter. And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.

A S it is expressly stated, that the object which the Pharisees had in view, when they put the question to our Lord respecting divorce, was to 'tempt' him—that is, to ensnare him into some reply which might form a ground of accusation—they were probably already aware of the doctrine which he held concerning divorce. Moses had permitted divorce, at the pleasure of the husband, except in a case of marriage

to which the husband had been compelled by law, on the ground of previous seduction.* In objecting, therefore, to the morality of the permission to divorce, Jesus would afford, it was thought, a handle for being charged with contradicting the law of Moses. this snare he escapes, by asserting the immorality of the practice, not on his own authority, (as he would have done to believers,) but on the authority of those very Scriptures, which Moses had written, and sanctioned by his miracles. He appeals to the original form of marriage pronounced by God himself on the first pair; and reminds them, that this being the original appointment of God, it could only have been owing to their hardness of hearts—their stubborn natures—their monstrous prejudices—that Moses was compelled to relax the law; whilst he left, at the same time, this record, to serve as a registered protest against the enactment.

It is somewhat singular, that so important a qualification of our Lord's rule, as that which we find in St. Matthew's narrative, should have been omitted by St. Mark and also by St. Luke. As it is found in St. Matthew's Gospel, we are quite sure that it proceeded from him; and to us therefore, the case remains practically the same, as if all the Evangelists had recorded it. But then, did those for whom St. Mark and St. Luke wrote require this qualifying

The right of the wife to divorce the husband was not part of the Mosaic law; but was a practice introduced only in the age of Christ.

clause less than those for whom St. Matthew wrote? Did they require that, for a time, it should not be laid before them? It would be difficult to conjecture. Perhaps the Gentile churches of Rome and Asia Minor, who first received the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, needed, from the prevailing loose notions among Gentiles concerning conjugal fidelity, that the precept should be given as yet without limitation, and in its simplest and strongest form. The churches of Judæa on the other hand, which are supposed to have been the first that used St. Matthew's Gospel, were already enough enlightened on the subject, to receive both the rule and the exception.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO JESUS.

Ver. 13-16.

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

This is, perhaps, the most striking of the many various and repeated lessons which our Saviour delivered on the requisite preparation for understanding and believing his Gospel. We know that he taught in parables and obscure hints to the Pharisees and the multitude, and enjoined silence on his disciples replainer instructions; and the reason was,

that the Pharisees and the people at large had not this requisite preparation. In what it consisted, the image of a child may suggest, even without the confirmation and illustration furnished by other parts of his teaching. It was humility, trust, and affection; in Scriptural language, love of God, fear of God, faith in God.

The analogy between Christians and children, in these respects, must not be confounded with that, according to which Christians are said 'to be born again,' 'regenerate,' and the like. As illustrating the doctrine of regeneration, the metaphor has reference to the Creator forming a new Being,-endowing a new creature with sensation, and thought, and feelings; as illustrating our preparation of heart for the Gospel, it is the nature and habits of childhood, to which reference is made, not the new creation of a human Being. With the former view are connected the ex pressions 'brethren,' 'beloved in the Lord,' and the like; with the latter that of 'little children,' as applied to Christians by Jesus, and by his apostle John. John's use of it is one of the characterizing peculiarities of his writings. Was he the most active in forbidding the children to be brought to Jesus, as he would seem to have been in forbidding the stranger to cast out devils in his name?* and did his heart therefore receive the lesson with greater warmth, and allow it to sink deeper?

The favour shewn by Jesus to these infants is often made an argument for infant baptism. In so apply-

^{*} Chap. ix. 39.

ing it, however, we should bear in mind what it is, that is proved by it. It establishes directly no more than that he considered infants capable of benefit from his blessing; but this, although of itself no proof, forms a very important feature in the presumptive body of proof to be gathered from the New Testament. At the same time, the fact, that the disciples looked on young children as improper objects of the Saviour's notice, indicates that, up to that period, none could have been baptized.

This is the more deserving of notice, because not far back in the narrative, we read of our Lord's setting a child before them, and making it a symbol of instruction. Does it not seem strange then, that, after witnessing our Lord's notice of infants so lately, the disciples should have supposed it improper that these should be brought to him? The inference is plain. They could only have considered his former notice as bestowed for the purpose of conveying instruction That notice shewed, indeed, that children were not objects of dislike to the Saviour; but here were children brought to be touched. virtue should go out of him for infants, was the scruple, and the only scruple; and this does seem to be designedly and formally removed by our Lord's touching them. So considered, the use of his words on this occasion in our baptismal service, is very appropriate, as indicating, that infants are fit subjects of admission to the blessings of the Christian covenant.

THE YOUNG MAN WHOSE RICHES WERE AN OBSTACLE TO HIS BECOMING A DISCIPLE.

Ver 17-31.

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves. Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters. or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

This is a very interesting narrative. The young man evidently came to Jesus with incipient faith; and, from the nature of his application, must have assured himself that the teacher was 'a prophet sent from God;' although he had not recognized in him the Christ, and understood not the true nature of his mission. How does the Lord behave to such an one? In the same manner as he did to his disciples, and to all who displayed any the least symptoms of a faith which might be ripened and improved; and it is this view of the incident which is perhaps the most instructive.

If we call to mind his usual method with his disciples, and with others who listened to him, and gave proof of an incipient faith, we shall recollect, that the mode in which he at first rewarded, and encouraged, and improved that faith, was not generally by an explicit declaration of gospel truths. What He said to them was rather calculated to awaken inquiry and search after further light. And in some instances this was the result; as, for example, in the case of the Syrophænician woman. On the other hand, instances of the failure of his kind endeavours have also been left on the sacred record, as if for the purpose of awakening the suggestion, that although God be working with us, and within us, yet we must work out the salvation which he has procured for us, or else that work will not be perfected in us. One very instructive instance of this will be found in a preceding portion of

St. Mark's narrative; * and if we turn to the passage, and compare together our Lord's behaviour during his conference with his disciples as there recorded, and his dialogue with the young man which we have now read, we cannot fail to be struck with the sameness of the method adopted by him in both cases; and also by the failure which resulted, in both cases, from hardness of heart on the part of those whom he was seeking to carry on from faith to faith. Confining our attention, however, to those circumstances in the present case, which shew that Jesus was, throughout the interview, giving the young man such hints, as would have made him, if he had had sufficient docility, a disciple, we may observe his reply to the young man's first question. There is not the slightest notice of the subject of his inquiry. Taking advantage of a phrase of courtesy which the young man had employed when addressing him, our Lord answers, 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God.' This was his usual method. It was his custom to engraft his instruction on every contingency which would bear it, even an occasional word or action. In this way it is that he adverts to the epithet 'good,' as applied to himself. And how does he this? Not by rejecting it, and saying that he is not worthy to be called good; but by reminding the young man of that which he already well knew, that God only was good. Had the young man paused upon the answer, and pondered it in his

^{*} Chap. viii. 14-21.

heart, and followed it up—as was doubtless intended by our Lord—it must have led him to the great truth, that, although none but God was good, yet He who stood before him was good, and this even because he was the Christ—the Son of God—the Immanuel. To give the language of our Lord its full force, we should, in reading the passage, make a pause after each of the sentences, 'Why callest thou me good?—there is none good but one,—that is, God.'

No suitable remark, however, was elicited from him so addressed, and Jesus, therefore, changes the course of his instruction, as if, haply, to find some other access to his heart and understanding. The youth was wrapped up, it would seem, in his veneration of the Mosaic law, and in his careful observance of it. Through this medium then some impression may be made. Returning to the question originally proposed, our Lord tells him, 'Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother,' all in a way which seems to intimate this-'Supposing you to continue under the Mosaic dispensation, you of course must expect to inherit life by keeping all his commandments. Now the suggestion which it was probably intended that this hint should convey, was, that to do so was impossible, and that to solve this very difficulty it was that the applicant had sought the man of God. Had the soil of his heart been prepared sufficiently, here was a clue to his obtaining, by an effort of thought, or rather of humble docile attention, a knowledge of 'a more excellent way.' But even this attempt failed, and only produced the dull reply, 'All these have I observed from my youth.'

It is delightful to trace the unwearied and anxious search of the Saviour even after a single lost one of the great human fold. His last reply is put in a way calculated to rouse the applicant, and (if he were susceptible of it) certainly to call into exercise his attention and inquisitiveness. He startles him with the assertion, that, even although all the terms of the present covenant were fulfilled, there would be something 'lacking.' But how does he say this? 'Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.'

Why did not such an address rouse the youth to inquiry? Our Lord has told us. He had connected the discipleship to which he invited him with a test—with a proposal of such paramount interest to the young man—that it forthwith absorbed his attention, and caused him to dismiss the original question altogether. 'Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee,' was probably the unuttered language of his mind, as he went from the presence of our Lord. He was not 'little child' enough to enter into the kingdom of God; but he had come to Jesus, and Jesus would not

cast him out. He had come to the Saviour, and the Saviour, accordingly, gave him the full means and opportunity of believing, even as he had done to his disciples. His earnest endeavour to awaken the young man's faith is apparent throughout the interview; and, in the last attempt, is very forcibly marked by the Evangelist's graphic description, 'Jesus beholding him loved him.' St. Matthew has omitted it, but St. Peter, under whose superintendence St. Mark's Gospel was written, had too much reason to remember the impressive character of our Saviour's look, to have left this little circumstance unrecorded.

His look indeed appears to have given an emphasis to many of those hints which he designed for exciting the attention and inquisitiveness of his hearers. Thus, in the sequel of the present narrative, he is described as giving force by a look to a saying, which was, no doubt, designed to prepare the minds of the disciples for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's assistance. When they remarked that the circumstances of a great portion of the world must exclude them from obtaining admission into his kingdom, 'Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are The hint itself corresponded with the possible. observation which he had only just before made to the young man, 'there is none good but one—that is, It was an early link in the chain of revelation which tells us, that the requisitions of Christianity are impracticable to unassisted man, but that man is not left to himself. The Christian is regenerate—a new nature is given to him—a new birth into otherwise unattainable righteousness; and it is 'the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,'* who will be able to accomplish things that are impossible to men, because 'it is God which worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure,'† and 'with God all things are possible.'

This remark, however, with which our Lord now directed his look from the young man to his disciples, was for the present as ineffectual as his dialogue with the young man himself. Peter, in the name of all, expressed the feeling which seems to have been prevalent amongst them, notwithstanding repeated rebukes and corrections—that his kingdom being near, they were to share the honours and rewards 'We,' he reminds Jesus, 'have left all and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore?' Our Saviour's reply seems, at first sight, instead of a fresh rebuke, to be an encouragement; by holding out to their mistaken ambition a promise of reward in kind in this life, as well as of future happiness. But the introduction of 'persecutions' in this train of promised wealth and greatness, as if forming their distinguishing character, at once nullifies the first impression made by the promise, and affixes to it an interpretation well adapted to the frame of mind

^{*} Ephesians iv. 24.

[†] Philippians ii. 13.

which it must have been designed to correct and improve. Jesus had more than once, of late, rebuked the temporal and worldly views of his apostles respecting his kingdom. Still the feeling, again and again, displayed itself; and his reply now seems to be purposely framed with reference to it, and to be made in this spirit-'The reward, about which you are speaking, shall be an hundredfold more than you have relinquished—but, as to the present life, it shall be a sort of property, dominion, and influence, whose chief feature shall be persecution—it is in a period to come, that you are to expect the life eternal.' In a free paraphrase of the original, it might be expressed thus-'Lands, houses, and brethren vou have left: and, in lieu of these, lands, houses, and brethren you shall have: but they shall be the land of the exile. the house of the imprisoned martyr, the many, brethren, the first born of whom shall be esteemed stricken of God, and his name a cause of your being hated of all men.'

JESUS FORETELLS THAT HE IS TO BE BETRAYED, PUT TO DEATH, AND RISE AGAIN.

Ver. 32—34.

And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him

to the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.

Agreeably with the view, given in the preceding section, of our Lord's words to his disciples, we find him, in the very next portion of the narrative, again telling them plainly those circumstances about his future history, which were incompatible with their perverse view of his kingdom. They had grounds now for believing on him, in spite of much that was incomprehensible to them in his proceedings: and, all amazed, they found him journeying still onwards to Jerusalem, and to certain death. Nevertheless they followed him, assured that he was the Christ, and expecting, no doubt, some miraculous solution of a difficulty which to them was inexplicable. His plain avowal of his approaching death seems to have kept alive this state of suspense and surmise, instead of tending to remove it. 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?'* was applicable to them even to the last period of their earthly intercourse with their Master.

^{*} Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

THE AMBITIOUS REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN.

Ver. 35-45.

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him. saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ve that I should do for you? They said unto him. Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they say unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them. Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

That all Jesus now said, about the near approach of his kingdom, was interpreted by the apostles in the sense in which every Jew expected the renewal of the theocracy, is evident from the request of James and John. They asked for posts of honour; and it was in vain that our Saviour, by allusion to the cup which his Father had given him to drink, and the baptism through which he was to pass, endeavoured to awaken them to a sense of their error. He was obliged

plainly to tell them, that, what he was going to purchase for them—that which made it expedient for him to go away—was, not the *prizes* of his kingdom, but the *means* of obtaining them. 'To sit on my right hand, and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.'

JESUS RESTORES BARTIMÆUS TO SIGHT.

Ver. 46-52.

And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, (the son of Timeus,) sat by the highway side begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

Besides the indication of divine power and divine mercy displayed in this miracle, its moral—its instructive character—is also apparent. The disciples had now been familiarized with this secondary and peculiar application of miracles by Jesus. In cases of blindness removed especially, their attention had been directed to the symbolical lesson conveyed thereby, concerning a partial blindness of heart, and

the gradual removal of it in their case, as well as to that total blindness which characterised others, who were not in the train of our Lord's followers. one occasion particularly,* when his repeated instructions had not been understood, we may remember that his discourse was followed up by a very remarkable cure of blindness. Here we have a similar instance of dulness to another lesson, followed by the like May we not infer that he intended them to see in this also an emblem of spiritual blindness, and its merciful removal by him? It was our Lord's custom even to repeat instruction that had been understood; but there was much more reason for doing so, when it had not at first produced the due impression. At this moment, certainly, the apostles appear to have required a continual renewal of the warning—that to many important features of Gospel truth they were still blind; that they still needed to apply for sight to Jesus, and were still to hope for it only by persevering in faith.

This use of the miracle, if it was so applied, would not interfere with its more essential character, that of its being wrought in evidence of his divine power, at a critical season, when his followers were amazed and staggered at his continuing his progress steadily to Jerusalem.† Nor, again, does it prevent us from considering it as an act of mercy likewise, on the bodily

See chap. viii. and the remarks on it.
 † See ver. 32, and John xi. 8.

affliction of Bartimeus. It was doubtless more than an act of mercy to him; it was a reward and strengthening of his faith—faith the more truly Evangelical, because his calamity had precluded him from witnessing the miracles of Jesus. Notwithstanding his blindness, he had gathered from others the report of them, and so devoutly, and humbly, and candidly had he pondered on them, and on all he heard of the marvellous person who wrought them, that he recognized in him the Son of David.

In Bartimæus himself, indeed, the apostles might have observed that which was a lesson for them. He, like them, recognized in their Master—the Son of David—the heir of the approaching kingdom; but he did not ask the monarch whose notice he had attracted, for lands, houses, and bounty. No; as if purposely to set Bartimæus's disposition in contrast with the request of James and John, and the unexpressed feelings of the other apostles; Jesus, instead of asking him, if he believed, bade him tell him what it was he petitioned for. 'What wilt thou that I should do for thee?* The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight.'

Hitherto resting his belief on the report of others, connected with his own knowledge of Scripture, the feeling of his heart, when he exclaimed, 'that I might receive my sight,' might have been like that of good Simeon's—a longing to satisfy himself more perfectly,

^{*} Τί θέλεις ποιήσω σοι. It is incorrectly rendered in our version, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?

by the evidence of sight, of that which he had, hitherto, ascertained by other means—a longing to see the Messiah. Having recovered the use of his eyes, he would not, it would seem, leave Jesus. He followed him to look on him, as well as to hear him. In his heart, if not on his lips, was surely Simeon's prayer of thanksgiving, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'*

^{*} Luke ii. 29, 30.

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM.

Ver. 1—10.

And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. And they went their way, and found the colt tied, by the door, without, in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strawed them in the way. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosannah in the highest.

ST. MATTHEW informs us, that our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, as here described, had been the subject of prophecy. It may be useful, therefore, to look at that prophecy, and see whether it will not assist us in understanding our Lord's purpose in what he did on the occasion. The prediction will be found in Zechariah, ch. ix., v. 9. Before referring to it,

however, let it be observed, that the Old Testament prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus, had not all the same kind of fulfilment. They will be found, on examination, to fall under one of the three following I. Prophecies in which the event was literally fulfilled; as that Bethlehem was to be the place of his II. Prophecies which were to be fulfilled only figuratively; of this kind are the predictions that he should reign, be a conqueror, and many others. Prophecies which were to be fulfilled both literally and To this head belong all those of Isaiah figuratively. respecting his opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, and performing other miracles, which were symbolical of Christ's ministry, as well as evidence of his divine mission.

Of these last there are some few, the figurative language of which would seem to have been fulfilled literally, only in order that the prophecy may be called to mind, and applied to Jesus, not literally, but figuratively. Such was this of Zechariah. He had prophesied of our Saviour under the image of a king, who was to come, according to the simple state of the early rulers of Israel, their judges, and their lawgiver Moses himself, sitting on an ass. By this description was foreshadowed the nature of our Lord's kingdom on earth. It was to be divested of all the pomp and circumstance which had hitherto characterised royalty. He was to be a contrast, in this respect, to the mighty conquerors of the world, such as Cyrus and Alexander, and even to the kings who

had ruled over God's own people. Pursuing this contrast, the prophet goes on to represent the Messiah's figurative reign, as, in other respects, opposed to a reign of earthly conquest, earthly pomp, and earthly 'I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.' The whole passage is a figurative description of the Messiah, his kingdom, and his conquests; containing. amongst its images, some which contradict its literal interpretation, and which were, doubtless, inserted, in order that a literal interpretation should not be put on it. He was to be 'a king,' and yet he was to be 'lowly;' 'his dominion' was to be 'from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,' and yet 'the chariot,' and 'the battle bow,' were to be 'cut off' from Ephraim and Jerusalem. It is among these qualifying images, that his riding on an ass, instead of the war horse, is introduced immediately in contrast with the mention of his being a king.

Now as this prophecy was one which especially pointed out (if these circumstances were attended to in the interpretation of it) the real nature of Christ's kingdom—or rather, as it directly contradicted the prevailing notion of a temporal king and conqueror, nothing could be more seasonable than that Jesus should follow up all the many discussions which, of late, he had held with his apostles on the subject, by

some act which might bring this prophecy vividly before their minds, and enable them, by connecting it with all he had said, to correct their obstinate notion respecting him. To those, on the other hand, who were not yet become his followers, the literal fulfilment of a well-known prediction would point him out as the person claiming to be Zion's king; and if they observed that this fulfilment, although in itself nothing extraordinary, and such as an impostor might have arrogated to himself, was yet so connected with a miracle, as that none but the prophetic King could have so fulfilled it; then, to these also, the symbolical lesson, the histrionic interpretation of Zecharias, so to speak, would be likely to prove the means of conversion and faith.

Let us see, then, in what way the occurrence took place, and what are the results recorded. Our Lord sends two of his disciples to bring an ass, which they were to find, at a given place, ready for them to take: the owner of which was, upon their saying that the Lord had need of it, to give it up. All this implies, that some previous revelation must have been made to the owners of the animal, of which the confirming sign would be the arrival of these two men, claiming it under certain circumstances which accorded with the revelation: even as the arrival of Cornelius's messengers at Peter's house in Joppa, after the vision to the apostle, was a sign that the vision was true. For the apostles, who had already witnessed so many of our Lord's miracles, no additional one would, perhaps, have been requisite, in order to make them believe that the prophecy of Zecharias was fulfilled in Jesus, when they beheld him riding on an ass into Jerusalem; but it was requisite for others, who had not been equally privileged. When Isaiah predicted, that the Messiah should open the eyes of the blind, and unstop the ears of the deaf, the principal design of the prophecy might have been that he should remove a spiritual dimness from the hearts and understandings of men. When Jesus literally fulfilled these prophecies, nobody could doubt that he was the person intended by them in their fullest signification: because the literal fulfilment involved, in each case, a miracle. But here the circumstances were different. The event predicted was not of itself miraculous; and it was therefore necessary so to bring it to pass, as to render the fulfilment miraculous. Jesus did this; and hence, probably, the readiness with which he was hailed by crowds as he passed on his way, the owners of the ass making known the event, and communicating to others the grounds of their own faiththe miraculous circumstance (whatever it was) which had wrought on them to give up the animal at the bidding of strangers, and without a single demur.

JESUS WITHERS A BARREN FIG TREE.

Ver. 12-14. 20-26.

And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of

figs was not yet. And Jesus answered, and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. --- And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ve desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

As a miracle, performed for the purpose of confirming the faith of the disciples, the withering of the fig tree could scarcely have been needed, after so many more striking miracles which they had now witnessed. This may be considered, therefore, rather as a symbolical act, made miraculous in order to fix the attention more strongly on it. And this it was the more calculated to do, because, although as an exercise of power, it exhibited less that was awakening than most of Christ's miracles on record; yet it must have attracted their especial notice, because it differed in character from all—or rather from all but one; and this very difference connected it the more strongly with the event which it was meant obviously to typify—the fate of his barren hearers.

All his miracles, which are recorded, had a benevolent object, except this and the sending the

devils into the herd of swine. The others were not merely indifferent in their results on the welfare of mankind, but positively beneficial. Whilst he proved by them his divine mission, he, at the same time, proclaimed the benevolent purpose of that mission. with this his manifestation of love and mercy towards mankind, was manifested also a judicial severity. He was to destroy the works of the Devil; and He was to exclude unrepentant man from his salvation. former of these awful truths was signified by the miracle which exhibited the devils, and, together with the devils, those impure animals possessed by them, driven headlong and hopeless down a precipice, and cast into the sea to perish. The latter was no less significantly intimated by the curse on the barren fig tree. Immediately and primarily it declared the fate of Jerusalem; but it was a lesson applicable to all God's creatures, who, then or hereafter, should be visited by the Saviour or the Comforter, and yet fail to repent, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.

It was a symbol which would seem to have been intelligible without further comment. Nevertheless, it appears from St. Luke's narrative that Jesus, not long before he performed the miracle, and as if to give a like meaning to the miraculous act, predicted the fate of the holy city and nation under a parable of the fig tree.* St. Mark has omitted the parable. These occasional omissions of each Evangelist, which, when

^{*} Chap. xiii. 6.

supplied from the other, throw so much light on the consecutive method of instruction adopted by our Lord, leave us room to conjecture, that our view of his ministry would be infinitely more clear and easy, if some of the facts which all have omitted could be recovered. But He who controlled the pen of holy record knew best; and whether it be that a greater exercise of docility, of faith, and of humility, is called forth; or that some object is attained unperceived by ourselves, it is, no doubt, wisest and best that it should be as it is. Our duty is to make use of that light which we have; for then only, to him that hath, will more be given.

In the narrative of this miracle there is something more that requires notice. The words, "for the time of figs was not yet," are added, not to explain why no figs were found on the tree; but why Jesus expected to find some on it. The time of gathering in figs was not yet-in other words, the fig-harvest had not yet been gathered in-and it was reasonable therefore to expect that fruit should be found on a tree, which, from its appearance at a distance, exhibited no signs of barren-Abundant in leaves, yet unprovided with fruit against the time of its visitation, it suggested an analogy, in this respect, between it and the devoted people of which it was a type; and which, like it, was not only barren of fruit meet for repentance, but abounded in an ostentatious display of much which ought to have been accompanied with that fruit, and which, without it, was hypocrisy.

Another circumstance, which may likewise have been intended as a minute point of coincidence in the analogy, is, that the blight of the condemned fig tree was not a partial, not a temporary one, but utter irrecoverable decay. "They saw the fig tree withered from the roots." It was Jerusalem's final doom; and the image exhibits, to us at least, a mournful and solemn coincidence with the rejected Saviour's lamentation over the holy city, the approaching destruction of which he had pronounced only two days before. To us, indeed, it suggests a picture even more awful and awakening-the last state of God's unrepentant Church, in every age, and under all His dispensations. He hath appointed a day; and that plant of His which shall have put forth no fruit by that day, will be "withered from the roots." The dews of heaven will fall, but not to revive that plant; there will be a worm within it that dieth not; and it will be cut down and cast into a fire that is not quenched.

There is yet another circumstance about this miracle, which deserves to be noticed; it is the instruction for which it gave occasion, unconnected with its emblematic purpose. Our Lord's behaviour, on the failure of his disciples to cast out the devils, and his permission to a stranger to effect what they could not, was noticed in its proper place. Here we come to a renewal of the lesson then given to them. On the apostles expressing surprise at the effect of the curse pronounced on the fig tree, he intimates to them both the extent of miraculous power

with which they were to be invested, and the limitations and conditions of its exercise-limitations and conditions which were perpetually to distinguish their authority from his. His language contains, not only a promise similar to that subsequently given, of their being enabled, if they had faith, to do greater works than even those which they had seen him do:* but the caution also before given, that their miracles could not be wrought like his, by their own independent authority, but by prayer and the other forms to which he had attached his promise of success, and in which consisted their due acknowledgment of the tenure by which they held their authority. He accordingly tells them-and this most solemnly-that if they bade the mountain remove and be cast into the sea, it should obey; but cautions them against the probable grounds of failure to which as dependent agents they were They were to pray that their command may subject. be effectual, and to trust that it would be so.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

Ver. 11. 15-19. 27-33.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.——And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the

[#] John xiv. 12.

temple. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. And when even was come, he went out of the city. --- And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, and sav unto him. By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority to do these things? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask of you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; they feared the people: for all men counted John, that he was a prophet indeed. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

In literal accordance with our Lord's avowal, that he taught daily in the Temple, we find him there the three first days of his final visit to Jerusalem. On the first, he merely makes his appearance; on the second, he exercises an authority which implied his having come, as the prophet expresses it, into his Temple;* on the third, the Jewish rulers demand of him the grounds of so unheard of an assumption of authority.

To explain why the Temple should have become the resort of money changers, and persons who sold doves, it must be observed, that all who came up to the

^{*} Malachi iii. 1.

great festivals, contributed a small sum to the treasury of the Temple. Now as many of these came from foreign countries, in which they sojourned - from Alexandria and Asia Minor, for instance—it was found a convenience, and worth the while of merchants, to provide the current coin of Judæa, which alone was received for the treasury, and to exchange it, at some little discount, with those who had only the foreign The offering of doves is alluded to in the account of Jesus's circumcision,* and was a custom which sufficiently explains why the traffic in doves also should have been carried on even within the courts of the Temple. As both the money and the doves were designed for sacred purposes, the traffic was, on this account, thought to be no violation of the sanctity of the house of God.

That Jesus should take on himself to pronounce authoritatively that it was, and to expel these merchants, was naturally regarded, by the chief priests, as an assumption of authority which could only be warranted by an extraordinary divine commission. Had they come to him with minds disposed candidly to examine whether this were so, they would, most assuredly, have met with such an answer as might have satisfied and converted them. They came, however, in a very different temper, and they received therefore a different reply.

This custom of framing his reply according to the

^{*} Luke ii. 24.

temper and design of the questioner, is a feature in our Lord's discourses which deserves to be noticed: because it has given rise to an objection, that his answers to the Pharisees were not always what we might expect from the author and promulgator of the To those, then, who came to him with a desire to learn, his words always conveyed some hint, at least, which would enable them to satisfy themselves; a hint, doubtless, proportioned, in its clearness, to the candour and faith which it rewarded: a hint not always, indeed, profited by, but still always given, agreeably to the promises. 'To him that hath shall be given.' 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise To those, on the other hand, who came to him without any disposition to learn, his replies were not, it would seem, designed to instruct; nor has the Christian reader of the account which contains these replies, any ground therefore to apply them as if addressed to himself. They were merely designed to silence, to confound, and to rebuke; and were often accordingly what logicians call arguments ad hominem. On this principle should be interpreted his answer to the Jews recorded in the tenth chapter of St. John,* and others, besides this now under consideration, in which apparently no instruction was intended. other occasions—as, for instance, in the account given at the beginning of the preceding chapter, and that in the chapter next to this-although the persons who

^{*} Ver. 34.

are represented as putting questions to him, appear to have done so in a spirit akin to that of these priests, scribes, and Pharisees, and of the Jews mentioned by St. John, we may presume that, for the sake of others who were likewise present, he so framed his answer to them, as not only to silence the cavillers, but to instruct the docile amongst his audience.

CHAPTER XII.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

Ver. 1-12.

And he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant: and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves. This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be our's. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. And have ve not read this scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way.

Our Lord gave as his reason for speaking in parables to those who did not choose to become his regular disciples, 'that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they might hear and not

understand.' It was a part of the scheme of his ministry, that docility should be evinced before any instruction was afforded; and that instruction, even to the disciples, should be gradually supplied, as they progressively gave signs of improvement in this quality. Consistently with this, then, a form of instruction was adopted, which, although unintelligible to his audience in general, was calculated to rouse the attention and inquiry of those amongst them who were well disposed, and who would thus be led to seek for, and to obtain, his meaning; while, at the same time, it would, like all divine blessings, be ineffectual for those who were unprepared to receive it. his parables were generally so composed as to be clear and intelligible to us in after days—to be clear even to his rude audience as soon as expounded-but just obscure enough, to need, in their case, the exposition.

An exception, however, from this general character of our Lord's parables must be made. It is when the information to be conveyed was, as in the present instance, no part of the mystery of redemption, and of the glad tidings of the Gospel—no part of that divine trust, which, like the talent in one of them, was the prize of him who already had. The denunciation of God's rejection of the Jews for their abuse of his former grace, was not of a character to require concealment from all but the docile; obviously because, in that case, those, above all others, to whom it was addressed as a last warning, would have been the very persons excluded from receiving it.

Although, therefore, this warning is here conveyed in a parable, yet it is expressly stated that his hearers required no explanation of it; but readily understood it, and would gladly, if they could have done it safely. have forthwith apprehended him for his boldness. St. Matthew's Gospel* supplies, indeed, a few explanatory words, which our Lord added, so that the dullest might not now be uninformed; but the particular imagery of the parable, and its minute and circumstantial detail of description, combined with his previous conduct in the Temple, convey a meaning at once so plain and so forcible, that few could have needed the exposition. Using the same figure of a vineyard and a pleasant vine, digged about and carefully tended, and yet proving unfruitful, and unprofitable to the owner, Isaiah had, seven hundred years before this, forewarned his countrymen of the loss of God's favour; + and the close agreement between our Lord's language, and the language of that prophecy, was too obvious to be unnoticed. The hedge of separation, which protected the vine from the intrusion of the stranger, and distinguished the vineyard from the common or the possession of others, was an image, which, to a people habituated to instruction and revelation through types and figures, must have readily suggested the fence-work of rites and rules by which God had separated them from the profane Gentile world. The tower, again, was no less sug-

^{*} Chap. xxi. 43.

[†] Chap. v. 1-7.

gestive of their Temple—that building to which the Lord of the vineyard attached the manifestation of his ever watchful providence over his vine.

The other images are equally apposite, and, when combined into one picture, form so graphic an allegory, that scarcely any of our Lord's hearers could have been blind to the intended application. The servants sent, from time to time, were disregarded, abused, and even killed—so had the Jews done unto the prophets, even to the last and greatest, John the Baptist. Then finally comes one, who is called 'the beloved Son' of him who was Lord of the vineyard; and the scene closes with the plot against his life, and the sentence which should await the murderers, if they carried their wicked design into effect. And this too they could not fail to apply to themselves in respect of him, against whose life they were conscious of plotting at that very time.

Observe too, it is not simply a son, whom the lord of the vineyard is represented as sending, nor his son, but his 'beloved son;' and this expression has a force which must not be overlooked. In one sense—namely, as our Creator and Preserver—God represents himself as the Father of all mankind. To his elect people the Jews, as to us Christians, He was eminently and peculiarly so; and to the obedient more especially still He was a father and they his children.* But

^{*} See the use of the expression 'sons of God,' opposed to 'daughters of men,' in Gen. vi. 2, 4, also Job i. 6, Hosea i. 10.

Him whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost, He called his 'beloved Son,' to denote a relation different both in kind and degree. At the baptism of Jesus, accordingly, when this sonship was testified and confirmed both by a vision and a voice, the term was then so used, as to exclude all ambiguity in its after use-to denote that 'the anointed Son of God' was not so called, as we are, because of our being created of God -chosen of God-obedient to God; but as partaking of the divine uncreated essence. The Jews, too, from their familiarity with the prophetic name Immanuel. connected with other prophecies, must have expected in their Messiah, 'God manifest in the flesh,' a Being whose relation to Jehovah should be different from that of Moses, or their prophets. When our Lord, therefore, emphatically told them, that, after all the other messengers of the lord of the vineyard had failed, 'the beloved son' was to come, one distinct from all sons and servants; even although they had not heard and heeded the revelation from Heaven that explained this expression, they must, one would suppose, have so applied it. Once more, they must either have recognized his claims, or have held him

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If the words 'then first began men to call upon the name of the Lord,' be properly, as some assert, 'then began men to be called by the name of the Lord,' it must have reference to the same fact. St. John, i. 12, 13, applies the old appellation to Christians, and points out how they are entitled to it beyond all others who are merely God's created, namely, from being born of God through the Spirit.

guilty of blasphemy, for so calling God his Father, as to make himself equal with God. It was not the bare charge of their conspiring against his life which now made their malice more malicious, but the charge of conspiring against the beloved Son of God.

QUESTION OF CERTAIN PHARISEES AND HERODIANS.

Ver. 13-17.

And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

As was lately observed, our Lord's unbelieving hearers were full of malice, on account of his claim to be the Messiah, 'the beloved Son of God.' In asking him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar they (with their minds fixed on the Messiah's temporal theocracy) made sure of effecting one of two things. He must either, as they supposed, by assenting to the legality of Cæsar's claims, renounce his own claim to be the Messiah—a claim but now so forcibly asserted; or else, by denying it, make himself amenable to the civil authorities. The Herodians, a

political sect, accordingly took part in the insidious embassy; because the object now was to involve him in a charge, not of a religious, but of a civil charactera charge of treason against the Roman government. His answer is accommodated to this view of the question, (the artifice which suggested it being of course known to him,) and contains a hint which they could not fully comprehend, although the pithy nature of the reply silenced them. 'They marvelled.' remark concerning the superscription and image on the coin, as connecting the tribute with civil authority, and the line which he drew between the claims of that and the things belonging to God. intimate a new character in the Messiah's theocracy. The ecclesiastical was no more to interfere with the civil rule; or the obedience of the subject to the human magistrate, be inconsistent with the obedience of the believer to God. Cæsar's dominion was to be one. Christ's another. Christ was a king, but not of this world.

QUESTION OF CERTAIN SADDUCEES.

Ver. 18-27.

Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man's brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. And the seven had her, and left no seed: last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall

she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

Our Lord, we see, was acceptable to neither of the two leading parties amongst his countrymen. As the Pharisees had been put to silence, the Sadducees now try their skill in argument with him, and present him with an imaginary case, which, in their view, seemed to render the doctrine of a future state inconsistent with the Mosaic law. By that law* it was ordered, that, 'if brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.' Here is a case, they meant to say, which proves the absurdity of supposing that God designs man for a future state; because, if the woman and her many husbands were to return to existence, must not the husbands revive incompatible claims to the same wife?

It is to be observed, that the Mosaic law did not teach the doctrine of a future state. On this singular

^{*} Deut. xxv. 5.

omission, Bishop Warburton has built an argument for the divine mission of Moses, and the exercise of an extraordinary Providence in the government of the Jewish people. For, argues he, no other people in the world ever were kept under control by their rulers, without this doctrine; Moses, therefore, who must have been aware of this great instrument of state-policy, especially from his education in Egypt, the parent of early lawgivers, could only have neglected to make use of it, through positive divine prohibition, and from his assurance of the interposition of an extraordinary Providence—the only substitute.*

At the same time, even in the books of Moses are contained intimations of a future state, which, like the obscure types of the ceremonial law, were unintelligible indeed at the time when they were delivered, and purposely so; but became intelligible as soon as that doctrine had been revealed by Christ. Moses to have taught a future state of reward and punishment, would have been an anticipation of the peculiar feature of Christianity—'the bringing life and immortality to light;' still, this does not forbid that the doctrine should have been so implied in the communications made by God to His people under the Law, as that certain passages, when explained by an after revelation, or read by those under the Law with an enlightening which made them exceptions, should bear undoubted reference to it. These hints

^{*} Divine Legation of Moses.

became gradually enlarged and made clearer and clearer, through the prophets; and thus, although there was no authority for the doctrine in the Jewish creed, yet, by the time of our Saviour's birth, the more learned, and indeed the greater portion of the nation, thought a future state most consistent with God's revealed word, and therefore maintained the doctrine. The Sadducees objected, and in their arguments confined themselves to the books of Moses, as the source of the original Mosaic institution-the test of that conformity and orthodoxy, which was binding on all members of the Jewish communion. our Lord's reply is taken, not only from this portion of the Scriptures, but from the very Scripture in which Jehovah is represented as first appointing Moses to be his messenger, and his lawgiver.

The Sadducees denied the existence of angels as well as the resurrection.* Our Lord's illustration of the future state of man, therefore, from the condition of 'the angels which are in heaven,' was a reproof to them for both errors; although, as the doctrine of a future state was the subject in question, and obviously the more important, their error on this point only was discussed.

QUESTION OF ONE OF THE SCRIBES.

Ver. 28-34.

And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them

^{*} Acts xxiii. 8.

well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him. The first of all the commandments is. Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God: and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly. he said unto him. Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

In reading this narrative, we should not omit to notice the striking contrast it exhibits to the two former. Unlike the arrogant and insidious Pharisees and Herodians; unlike, too, the prejudiced Sadducees, the scribe who now questioned our Lord, really seeks for information, and has some preparation of heart; although not quite enough, it would seem, at that time, to enable him to understand and be converted, He was 'not far from the kingdom of God.' Observe, therefore, how very different our Lord's reply to him Agreeably to his usual method, he had silenced and confounded the former uncandid and indocile questioners, by answers which only exposed their ignorance and error. But his words to the scribe are such as would seem to encourage further inquiry, and to convey no imputation on his understanding or his heart.

As to the ground of his inquiry, it probably arose from the opposition, which, in the nice questions of Pharisaical learning, was made between the importance of observing the outward acts of religion, and of practising the moral duties and cherishing inward The tone of religion among the learned evidently inclined strongly to the former-the ceremonial law was in greater repute than the moral. Hence our Lord's own words afterwards, 'Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.'* In these words he opposes their rigid observance of all that was ritual, and religious in appearance, to what are emphatically termed 'the weightier matters of the law.' Some scruples with reference to this general corruption might have crossed the mind of the scribe, when he asked Jesus 'which was the first commandment of all. The ten commandments are called simply the commandments; the introduction, therefore, of the word all, implies that he directed the question to the whole of what was commanded by God, through Moses and the prophets, -ceremonies and moral precepts. Our Lord understands the drift of his question, and, accordingly, so replies, as to declare, that not only the first of the

^{*} Ver. 38—40.

moral code was more important than the first of the ceremonial, but that the whole of the moral law was weightier than any part of the ceremonial. This is the first commandment of all, says he, repeating the words of the commandment; and not only does this stand before the ceremonial commandments, but the second is like unto it—like it in precedence and superior weight—and better, according to the scribe's own comment, 'than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.'*

JESUS NOTICES THE DOCTRINE AND THE CONDUCT OF THE SCRIBES.

Ver. 35-40.

And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his son? And the common people heard him gladly. And he said unto them in his doctrine, Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

In the preceding statement, we have seen a scribe discontented with the view of his fellow-scribes respecting the relative importance of the moral and the ceremonial law, and instructed, and confirmed in

^{*} Πάντων τῶν ὁλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν. The article is omitted in our English version.

134 Jesus commends a poor widow's offering.

his protest, by Jesus. In the passage which follows, our Lord is represented as weakening the authority of the whole body of scribes or interpreters of the law, by proposing a question for their solution, openly, in the temple where he was preaching. He asked them to explain in what sense Christ, or the Messiah, was at once to be 'the son of David,' and 'David's Lord?' Their inability to answer the question was a triumph over them, which was acknowledged by the mass of his hearers; who, accordingly, 'heard him gladly.' The impression so produced enabled him to urge, with greater effect, on the half-converted scribe, and on others, the warning with which he follows it up, against the authority of the scribes, either as instructors or as examples.

JESUS COMMENDS A POOR WIDOW'S OFFERING.

Ver. 41-44.

And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This remark should perhaps be considered in connexion with the preceding instruction and warning. The widow offering her mite was a present object, on which our Lord hinged the continuance of the lesson he had been giving. He had before warned his hearers against the example of the scribes in many respects; by his present remark, he declares that their most specious virtue, that of liberality, was like all the rest, empty show; inasmuch as even this virtue depended, not on the external act, but on the intention and circumstances of the giver.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOPICS OF INQUIRY RESPECTING THE PROPHECY RECORDED IN THIS CHAPTER.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter is by some applied exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem; by others to that event, and also to the end of the world. For the purpose of obtaining, as far as may be, a right notion of its true import and object, it will be useful to consider, I. The assertion with which it concludes—that all should be fulfilled during the generation of those addressed. II. The character of the prophetic language among the Jews, and the probable adoption of it here. III. Whether, according to this method of interpretation, history bears us out in the interpretation of all the prophecy. IV. Whether some portions of the prophecy, which seem to be applicable to the day of judgment, can be satisfactorily reconciled with the declaration of Christ. respecting the time of its fulfilment.

TIME OF THE PROPHECY'S FULFILMENT.

Ver. 28-37.

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near: so ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all

these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

The declaration respecting the time of the prophecy's fulfilment closes the whole, and is contained in these last ten verses of the chapter. All was to come to pass within that brief period which suffices for a generation of men to die off and be succeeded by another.

That "the day and the hour" should, nevertheless, have been left unrevealed, was a natural and reasonable trial of the disciple's faith; who, having observed the progressive accomplishment of the signs, was to be ready, when the *last* appeared, for the event itself; and, by his reliance on its certain approach, to show an exercise of faith in those prophetic signs. Our Lord, however, declares that he was himself ignorant of "the day and the hour." This may appear strange and inconsistent with other avowals which he makes of himself, and of his divine nature. If it be so, an objector may say, then was not God manifested in Christ, and Christ could have been only a messenger divinely inspired, and limited, although in a less

degree than others, in his view of the scheme of Providence. It is remarkable, too, that in the narrative of the Acts, where our Lord's prediction of the same event is alluded to, the prediction is accompanied with a similar declaration. 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power;'* that is, set apart as his peculiar province of knowledge.

It is impossible to explain it by reference to those mysterious distinctions in the divine nature, the existence of which we infer from other parts of Scripture. For, if the terms Father and Son be used in this sentence for the first and second Persons of the Godhead, as so distinguished, it is plain that omniscience is denied to the second Person.

But Christ could not have preached contradictions; and if, in so many parts of his ministry, he clearly manifested himself as 'perfect God, and perfect man,' he could not have meant to disavow this. If, on one occasion, in accordance with much besides which he did and said, he told his disciples, 'All things that the Father hath are mine,' by the expression, 'what the Father has put in his own power,' and by this similar phrase which we meet with in St. Mark, he could not have meant, that any portion of divine

^{*} Acts i. 7. The ldia if ovoia. The ldia here gives to the assertion of the Acts the same force as St. Mark's expression, "no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

[†] *John* xvi. 15

knowledge was withheld from him; but that the exact knowledge of the time of the coming of his kingdom was not part of the revelation which they were to receive from him. This was all the reply which their question needed, and this is all that could have been intended.

Nor did his mode of expressing this necessarily suggest any different view at the time. For, from the Gospel narratives, especially St. John's, it appears to have been not unusual with our Lord, when contrasting the manifestation of God with his unperceived incomprehensible existence, to apply the term 'Father,' as associated with the latter. Thus He declares: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.'* because, namely, He was God made visible—the manifested, in opposition to the unmanifested, unperceived, incomprehensible nature and existence of God. I should interpret in the same way the following passages, amongst others. 'My Father is greater than I,'t that is, what is manifested of God is not so great and glorious as what is still unrevealed to man. 'I go to my Father,'I that is, God ceases to be manifest in the. 'The Comforter,' (that is, the Holy Ghost,) 'whom I will send unto you from the Father,' \ that is, when God ceases to be manifested in my human nature. It is in this sense, perhaps, and in allusion to such expressions as these, that God is called in the

^{*} John xiv. 9. † John xiv. 28. ‡ John xvi. 16, 28. § John xv. 26.

apostolic language, 'the Father of lights.'* If, then. the term Father be employed when a denial of divine manifestation is intended, a very natural way it was to describe a portion of knowledge not revealed, by ascribing it to the Father only. It was equivalent to saying, that it was not designed for any scheme of revelation, whether conveyed through men, through angels, or through the manifestation of God in Christ, There is really nothing strange in representing unrevealed knowledge as attached to God's unrevealed nature; or in saying of it, that it belonged not to man, to angels, nor even to the Son, the last and fullest channel of communication. Christ was here speaking of himself as the angel of the new covenant: and this information made no part of the message which, by virtue of that office, he was conveying to mankind.

EXPRESSIONS USED IN THE PROPHECY.

No reader of the prophetic books of the Old Testament can fail to have noticed a striking feature in the language of old prophecy. It is not only figurative, but the figures are of the boldest kind, involving analogies so remote, as in some instances to be scarcely discoverable. If revolutions in empires be the subject, they are represented as a disturbance of the laws of the natural world, and the prophetic imagery is that of sun, moon, and stars in commo-

^{*} James i. 17,

tion.* If a deliverer is promised to the Jews, the prophet expresses the promise by predicting the rising of a star, and the like. † An Egyptian hieroglyphic translated into verbal description, would hardly consist of bolder images than are found in some passages. Had the long sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt any influence in creating this style? Possibly it may have Hieroglyphic symbols must not, however, be traced to mere Egyptian ingenuity. Contrivances more or less hieroglyphic would seem to be the natural result of man's first efforts to record those thoughts which have no exact counterparts in the material The Mexican, by painting a ship, could convey intelligence of the arrival of strangers on his coast: and could have recorded thus any mere objects of sight; but a further effort to record abstract ideas -such as strength, superiority, time, age-would force the half-civilized author upon the use of symbols. which suggested these ideas, as qualities conspicuous in the real objects so represented. A lion, for example, would represent strength. Or again, a symbol would be adopted because of some analogy; as a circle, to denote eternity; or from some accidental association, as a star for destiny, and the like. Joseph's dream of the stars which made obeisance to him, t we recognise this same mode of symbolizing ideas, before the family of Jacob went down into

^{*} See especially Isaiah xiii. 10; xxiv. 23; Jeremiah xv. 9; Ezekiel xxxii. 7; Amos viii. 9. † Numbers xxiv. 17. † Genesis xxxvii. 9.

Egypt; at least if we allow the dream to be in accordance with the usual images of Joseph's mind.

Hence not only hieroglyphic writing, but language, such as that of the Jewish Prophets, bearing a certain affinity to it, without being necessarily derived from it. In the formation of the vehicle of thought, suppose the idea to be expressed was 'strength,' for instance. If it was required to give utterance to this idea first by word of mouth, the word uttered would be that which denoted a lion, perhaps, or any other very powerful animal or natural agent. If again the idea 'strength' was first required to be expressed in writing, the painted or sculptured image of the animal most noted for strength would be the written word. abstract terms, in a more polished stage of expression. betray this boldly figurative origin; although time has destroyed their power of suggesting the parent image, as it has, in other cases, wholly obscured and obliterated it. Take, as instances, two common words of very different import, connected with the same class of sensible objects, consideration and disaster. In their original formation, they had both reference to an emblematic or hieroglyphic use of the stars. Milton has happily recalled the primitive character of the latter in the following lines.

> 'As when the sun, new risen, Looks through the horizontal misty air Shorn of his beams; or, from behind the moon, In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds.'*

^{*} Paradise Lost, book i. 594.

It is to be observed, however, that, in the Jewish Scriptures, the use of this hieroglyphic writing, or rather of language the hieroglyphic character of which is still apparent, was adopted only when the subject of the inspired writer was either poetry, or a description of some prophetic scene, which, by its nature, required to be dimly shadowed forth, and not distinctly described. Perhaps too, by this appropriation of a particular style to certain prophecies, the attention of the people was fixed to them as prophecies; and then it will have answered a similar purpose with some of the methods of instruction adopted by our Lord-that of exciting curiosity and impressing the lesson. However this may be, with the Jews this kind of writing, from the earliest times, characterized prophecy as distinguished from historical relation; and especially those predictions which involved great and important changes in the civil or religious state of the world. To mention one. The vision of the beasts, in which Daniel declares the succession of the four great empires,* whether it be the language in which the revelation was made by God to him, or by him to others, is plainly of this kind. So too the older prediction of the Gentile prophet Balaam.+

That our Lord, who taught by symbol and in parables, as if to awaken attention by reviving forms of expression nearly obsolete in his day, should also revive this language in his prophecy, is not to be

^{*} Chap. vii.

[†] Numbers xxiv. 17.

wondered at. By doing so, indeed, he attained a further object of great importance—he thus connected his own clearer predictions with the former hints and obscure revelations of the Old Testament prophets. The images of the prophecy which we are now considering are all derived from the Old Testament Scriptures; from one ancient prophecy especially, which has for its subject the very event predicted by our Lord. He collected, as it were, the detached portions of a great prophetic group of figures found in the Old Testament; and, by additions of his own, fitted them into one piece; as the modern artist fits and unites the scattered fragments of some ancient piece of sculpture, giving a meaning by combination to that which before was only a disjointed heap-an object of surmise and wonder.

The reason for the employment of such terms in our Lord's prophecies, rather than any newly-invented ones of a like character, or than the exclusive use of ordinary language, is, so far, sufficiently obvious. It remains for us to inquire whether, within the period specified—that is, within the date of the generation addressed,—events came to pass, which corresponded with these images, and with the rest of the prophecy; and whether these events were of sufficient importance to allow us, without hesitation, to pronounce, that the prophecy has been fulfilled in them.

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE.

Ver. 1—4.

And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

The Temple-service was an essential element in the constitution of the Jewish polity, and necessary to its very existence. The destruction of the Temple was, therefore, the appropriate sign of God's new kingdom having come, and the pledge of its establishment. It is, accordingly, the one sign to which all the others tend. The prophecy begins with it, and then proceeds with the several approximations to it. main sign was given within the period assigned by our Saviour. The generation who were alive when he foretold the event had not all passed away when Titus destroyed the Temple and city, and passed a ploughshare over its ruins, in token of its being destined by the conqueror to be left desolate for ever. barren fig tree was then 'withered from the roots.' Notwithstanding the natural desire of the Jews that their Temple should be rebuilt, and that the rebuilding was attempted by the emperor Julian, the fulfilment of prophecy remains unimpaired.

sign that the kingdom under the Law is abolished, and that under the Gospel established in its stead, remains for all ages.

THE RISE OF FALSE CHRISTS.

Ver. 5, 6.

And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

There can be no stronger proof of the full conviction that the Jews of our Saviour's time had, of the period of their Messiah's advent being come, than the ready credulity with which they followed pretender after pretender, and the enthusiasm which anticipated and gave birth to these impostures. 'I am come,' said our Lord to them, 'in my Father's name, (i.e., doing mighty works in my Father's name,) and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, (i.e., claiming to be received on his bare word.) him ye will receive.'* His prophetic declaration was most fully verified. Josephus, the Jewish historian. records several instances; and one is alluded to in the history of the Acts, where we read of 'that Egyptian, which before those days made an uproar, and led out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers.'t This took place, according to Josephus and Eusebius, during the procuratorship of Felix.

^{*} John v. 43.

[†] Acte xxi. 38.

WARS AND RUMOURS OF WARS.

Ver. 7, 8.

And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

The continual agitation of men's minds during the reigns of Otho and Vitellius, and still more on Vespasian becoming a candidate for the imperial crown, were events in which this prediction of 'kingdom rising against kingdom,' and of 'wars and rumours of wars,' might be certainly recognized. But, as during all these troubled scenes, the Jews were waiting, with illsuppressed longings after vengeance, for the vainlyexpected signal from a temporal Messiah; this is more probably the specific circumstance pointed at in the hint of 'rumours of wars.' There was a sullen and foreboding murmur going through the nation, such as generally precedes the revolutionary efforts of an oppressed people, long before the rebellion was actually determined on. Without Christ's warning, the disciples might have been induced to expect, that it would lead sooner than it actually did to the final overthrow predicted.

EARTHQUAKES, FAMINES, AND TROUBLES.

Ver. 8.

And there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

148 Earthquakes, famines, and troubles.

To this list of natural evils St. Matthew adds 'pestilences.'* As these are the almost certain result of famine, or great scarcity of food, they may be considered as implied in the account of any remarkable scarcity. Such a famine took place in the fourth year of Claudius Cæsar's reign. It was specifically foretold by Agabus, and was the occasion of the first contribution at Antioch for the relief of the Christians of Judæa, who, on the strength of the prediction, were provided against the calamity.† Eusebius states, that the whole Roman empire was affected by it.

Of earthquakes, too, we have a great deal recorded. Besides those which appear from Philostratus, the biographer of Apollonius Tyanæus, to have been felt at this period in Crete, Smyrna, Miletus, and Chios, Josephus mentions one which occurred in Judæa while the Idumæans were encamped near Jerusalem. Had this especially happened, without the prophetic check, the Christians might have supposed that the holy city was destined to fall by it in part, and might have abandoned their post before the time determined.

Of tumults, the whole history of the period affords abundant evidence; and, as each of these, like the earthquake and the murmuring of the Jews, might have made the time of Jerusalem's fate seem nearer than it really was, we may recognize the purpose of all these being specified as only 'the beginning of sorrows.'

^{*} Chapter xxiv. 7.

[†] Acts xi. 28.

PERSECUTION OF THE DISCIPLES.

Ver. 9. 11-13.

But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.—But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

For an account of the fulfilment of all this part of the prophetic description, we need not go further than the inspired history itself. The Acts of the Apostles contains an illustration of all the various kinds of persecution here enumerated; and from an allusion in St. Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians* to his own, it appears how small a part must have been recorded by the inspired historian. It is impossible to consider these predictions, in any point of view, without being at the same time struck with one most remarkable feature in them—their utter inconsistency with the character of an impostor.

The command that when delivered up to their persecutors, the accused should not think beforehand what they were to say, may be regarded as a warning

^{*} Chap. xi. 23, 24, 25.

that their faith would be especially put to the test on these occasions; and that the evidence of its not failing them would be their abandonment of all human arts of eloquence in pleading their cause. Thus each man was provided with a miracle in the use of inspired language, on the occasion when he most needed it; and this miraculous assistance was the appointed reward of his faith in the present prediction.

At the same time, the fact that many should prove too weak for the trial, was foretold; in order that their failure, when it occurred, might not be imputed to the weakness of their cause; and that others might be the less likely to yield to the dismay and forlorn feeling, which would be naturally engendered, at finding friends, and kindred, and all men their enemies.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ALL NATIONS.

Ver. 10.

And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

This, we know, has never been literally fulfilled. How far the wide circulation of the Gospel amongst the various nations of the world, before the destruction of Jerusalem, may be considered as an adequate fulfilment, is a point to be considered.

There are two remarks which may be offered in favour of this view. One is, that in the language of Scripture, and not of Scripture alone, the imperfect action is not unfrequently put for the perfect—the beginning for the accomplishment. It is thus that

we are sometimes said to be 'saved' by having our salvation begun. So, too, we are sometimes called 'just' and 'justified,' when no more is intended by the expressions than that we are put into a way to become just and justified.

The other remark is, that, at this period, all nations were under the Roman dominion-all, at least, who were objects of any consideration with the persons addressed. The preaching of the Gospel at Rome, therefore, may be considered in the light of preaching it to all the Gentile nations, inasmuch as Rome was the head and representative of the Gentile world. Taking this view, in connexion with the preceding, the circumstance that Rome had received the Gospel, may be considered as the fulfilment of the prophecy—as the work of universal conversion commenced, although not perfected. this, by the way, may account for St. Luke's closing his history of the Acts, precisely at the period when St. Paul arrives at the seat of empire and opens his commission there; all the preceding narrative having been occupied with the progressive course of the Gospel from the Jews to the devout Gentiles, from the devout Gentiles to the heathen converts, up to this eventful period, when the whole heathen world was preached to in Rome, its capital and representative.

THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION STANDING WHERE IT OUGHT NOT.

Ver. 14-20.

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judæa flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

Of all the prophetic warnings, this is perhaps the most striking. In another Evangelist, the meaning is more expressly given thus, 'When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies.'* In other words, the Christians were to wait, until they had seen the Roman standards pollute the holy city, and found themselves encompassed by armies, and their escape to all appearance precluded, before escape was to be attempted. It was a trial that severely tested the faith of the primitive Church, and that faith was not found wanting. Jerusalem was encompassed by the troops of Cestus Gallius. The Roman commander, finding himself too weak, however, to storm the city, with-

[#] Luke xxi. 20.

drew his forces; and in the interim which followed between this and the arrival of Titus, an opportunity was given to the Christians to escape, which could not, humanly-speaking, have been foreseen. They fled in haste to Pella, and suffered no harm during the dreadful scene which followed—not a hair of any head was hurt.

THE FIGURATIVE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHANGE FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW THEOCRACY.

Ver. 21-27.

And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not: for false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.

The last sign which was to precede the establishment of the new theocracy, was the destruction of the holy city, and especially of its Temple. The mention of this, accordingly, is followed by a description, which, agreeably to the interpretation of the old prophetic language, may have been intended to signify that change of dispensation which was now to be finally and completely accomplished.

Lest, however, the disciples, under the influence of

154 The figurative description of the change

deeply rooted prejudices, should conceive that Christ's reign so established was to take place by his presence in the flesh once more amongst them, he warns them against this misconception, by repeating his prediction concerning false Christs, and tells them 'if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or lo, he is there; believe him not.' Many impostors, he predicts, would take advantage of the erroneous notion, and delude many, (as actually was the case;) but Christ, in this new kingdom of God, was not to be 'here,' or 'there.' There was to be no local temple or kingdom. The hour was come, when neither to the mountain in Samaria, nor yet to Jerusalem, should be attached the presence of God; but the true worshippers were to worship Him in spirit and in truth. So 'when he was asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say lo, here, or lo, there, for the kingdom of God is within you.'* He was indeed, according to the promise made to his disciples, to 'come unto them;' and, in remembrance of this, the apostle who survived the giving of those signs which were to indicate his fixed residence with his Church, exclaims, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus;'† but He was to come spiritually—to be thus within 'the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.'1

^{*} Luke xvii. 20, 21. † Rev. xxii. 20. ‡ Ephes. i. 23.

After what has been already said of the import and character of the prophetic figures here employed, it will be unnecessary to point out their fitness on the present occasion. There is one, however, which may seem to require a literal and not a figurative acceptation, and to be thus inconsistent with the view which we have taken of the fulfilment of the prophecy—the image of the angels sent to gather 'the elect from the four corners of the heavens.' But even this is not inapplicable to the event which took place on the establishment of the Church, when the Lord by his 'angels,' or ministers, selected and called various nations into his kingdom. The term angel is by the inspired writers applied to those so sent, and the term elect, to those so called. St. John, for instance, uses the term 'angel' in the sense of bishops.* and the term 'elect' became even more familiar in Christian For the frequent use of this latter term there was indeed a further reason. God's former kingdom consisted of persons selected out of the world; set apart, and made His peculiar people. In speaking, therefore, of the new theocracy—the spiritual kingdom of God-the subjects of that kingdom were fitly designated by a title, which pointed out their claim to be the successors of the Jewish Church, in all the privileges of God's elect.

^{*} Rev. ii. and iii.

At the same time, the sending forth of God's angels to gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven, looks so much more like a description of the day of judgment, that many interpret it also of that day; some apply it wholly in this manner. The mention of this difference of interpretation naturally leads us to the next point proposed for consideration, namely,

WHETHER SOME PORTIONS OF THE PROPHECY, WHICH SEEM TO BE APPLICABLE TO THE DAY OF JUDG-MENT CAN SATISFACTORILY BE RECONCILED WITH THE DECLARATION OF CHRIST RESPECTING THE TIME OF ITS FULFILMENT.

On this question turns the main difficulty, the only real difficulty, indeed, which is found in interpreting and applying our Lord's prophecy. If the language of the prophecy, according to the interpretation proposed, admits of being explained by reference to the change of dispensation which was consummated and legally sealed on the abolition of the Temple-service, then the whole did take place within the period prescribed. But, if any portions of it suggest, and seem designed to suggest, a more awful scene which is yet to be realized, how are we to account for the apparent nonfulfilment of these? While He who delivered the prophecy preached Truth as the characteristic of his doctrine, and has confirmed, by all that can give confirmation to the candid, his own claim to be 'the Truth,'* the difficulty can occasion no faltering of faith; no

[#] John xiv. 6.

doubt, in that sense of doubting; but it may well occasion doubt, as to the way in which the meaning of the prophecy is to be received.

. Let us see then. Our Lord was professedly prophesying of the change of dispensation, the pledge of which was the removal of the Temple-service; for, out of a remark on the goodly appearance of the Temple, the whole discourse took its rise, and is clearly connected throughout with it. In the course of the prophecy he has adopted a figurative language from the Old-Testament-prophets, consisting of a picture of the heavenly system deranged, and the angels of God busy with the execution of His high commands. should we refuse to look on all this as symbolical—as similar to the bold images by which the Old-Testamentprophets conveyed so much of their meaning? But then he has introduced, it may be said, expressions which belong to a description of the day of judgment, Still, may not our Lord have designed, in this prophecy. another application of these expressions? May he not have designed, by this transfer of images, from a description of the coming of His kingdom in heaven, to that of the coming of His kingdom of heaven on earth, that we should so connect the two, as to be confirmed in our hopes or our fears of the one, whenever we read of the accomplishment of the other?

That such was his purpose, we may be led to surmise, if St. Mark's was the only record of the prophecy. But if we turn to St. Matthew, we shall observe, that his Gospel contains two distinct prophecies—the one in the twenty-fourth, the other in the twenty-fifth chapter. The former of these corresponds to the prophecy recorded by St. Mark; the latter relates to the course of events, subsequent to the establishment of God's kingdom, inclusive of that last great day, when the Son of man shall come to judgment. In St. Luke, as in St. Mark, the record appears to be confined to that change of God's kingdom, of which the consummation and seal was the destruction of Jerusalem.

It is true, that there are some few coincidences of expression between the twenty-fifth chapter also of St. Matthew's Gospel and this fifteenth of St. Mark; and the like coincidences may be observed between the two chapters of St. Matthew. But agreeably to the supposed intent of divine wisdom, in connecting the two events by certain common images, so that the first coming of Christ when fulfilled, might be a pledge of his second and final coming; the more striking from the association of ideas;—agreeably to this, some similarity of language may be expected, as well between St. Mark's account and the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, as between the two successive chapters of St. Matthew. Just such a coincidence will be observed.

That the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew commences a new series of prophetic visions, beginning from the establishment of the Gospel kingdom, marked as that event was by the sign of the overthrow of the Jewish polity, is suggested by the form of expression used by the Evangelist. 'Then,' writes he, 'shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins,' &c., that is, the kingdom of heaven on earth having been established, then, such and such shall be the condition of the Church; until the Church, the present kingdom of heaven itself, gives way to a future state, the end and consummation of all God's probationary dispensations.

Observe, therefore, the way in which the narrative proceeds from the one prophetic view to the other; and you will discover a further fitness in the two being stated together, and connected by common forms of expression. In the prophecy of that terrible scene, in which the Jewish polity was to be dissolved, the Temple and the holy city sacked and levelled, and its inhabitants massacred, or driven houseless through a conquered land, it was needful to give the Christian Church the fullest assurance of security. On no occasion is the term 'elect' more forcibly applied to them. On a former occasion, he had called them his 'little flock,' that flock for which the 'good shepherd would lay down his life;'* and had told them, 'Fear not,' for it was their Father's good pleasure to give them 'the kingdom.' But it was requisite to give them more definite assurance of his protection. Even the miseries of Jerusalem were to be shortened for the new 'elects' sake; and, although they should be dispersed, although many who were intended for

^{*} John x.

[†] Luke xii. 32.

the increase of the little flock, were not of the original fold, from the four quarters of the world he promises to gather in subjects for his kingdom, sheep for his fold—to elect a new Israel of God.

All these assurances were requisite; but might they not have led to the visionary prospect of a state of glory, rather than one of trial? Might not the Church have looked for an immediate millennium; especially as such was, in fact, the view which long habit had given them, as Jews, of their Messiah's reign? The prophecy of the condition of the Church after the destruction of Jerusalem—after its sign of permanent establishment—is conveyed, in a way strikingly calculated to prevent this delusion. 'Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened'—and the comparison made is to 'the wise and foolish virgins;' and this again is followed up by a similar parable of 'the servants and the talents.'

Both these parables were evidently intended to warn the Church, which had required and received strong assurance of support as God's 'elect,' that of the very elect there should be a further separation, and that those only who were on the watch would be finally blessed. In both parables, those to whom a difference of allotment is made are represented as members of the Church, or the body of 'elect.' In the parable of the virgins, they are the bridegroom's chosen friends, an image with which the disciples were, by this time, quite familiar. In the parable of the talents, the same truth was conveyed, by the circumstance, that all who

had the trust committed to them were the Lord's servants—the very title which the apostles, and especially St. Paul, afterwards applied to themselves, as if in reference to those many forms of instruction in which their Master had represented them under this image. St. Paul styles himself in his Epistle to the Romans, 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.' St. Peter in his second Epistle, 'Simon Peter, a servant of Jesus Christ.' Of all his followers Jesus spoke, when he told Pilate, 'If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight;'* and of all, when he promised, 'If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.'†

The period assigned for all this was that which was to elapse between the ascension of Christ, and his reappearance to judge the world. In the parable of the virgins, it is represented by the interval between the bridegroom's absence and return to celebrate the feast—the season of the Church's finished probation and completed joy. In the parable of the talents, it is marked by the similar temporary absence of the Lord, who was to return and take account of his servants.

That St. Mark should have omitted the latter prediction, will not appear so strange, if we consider, that he wrote for a Church composed very much of heathen converts, and therefore less likely to require warning against the strong association which was felt by the Jewish converts, between the Messiah's king-

^{*} John xviii. 36.

⁺ John xii. 26.

162 Question whether certain expressions, &c.

dom and a state of immediate glory and happiness. The same motive might have influenced St. Luke. St. Matthew, on the other hand, was writing for those who had been converted from the centre of Judaism, and whose numbers were receiving additions continually from the same quarter. It is not the only common omission of St. Mark and St. Luke which may be accounted for by this circumstance of difference between their original readers, and those for whose use St. Matthew's Gospel was first composed.

CHAPTER XIV.

JESUS ANOINTED FOR HIS BURIAL.

Ver. 3—9.

And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? for it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

WHEN Saul was marked out by God for the holy kingdom of Israel, 'Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?'* Had this woman's anointing of Jesus any the like purpose? Did she anoint him for that spiritual kingdom in which he was to be Lord and Christ† for ever? Had she the faith to perceive that his death and burial were the gate through which he was to pass to it? Was she

^{*} I Samuel x. I.

t i. e. Anointed.

divinely instructed to perform, like the prophet of old, a ceremony significant of this? Or was it the suggestion of her own heart, warm with feelings of attachment and reverence for Jesus? Such would seem to The offering she brought was have been the case. Jesus accepted it, gave it a reference to his burial, and ordained that wherever his Gospel should be preached, in all the world, this that this woman had done should be told in memorial of her. Surely we may learn from that memorial, that it is no waste of money to make costly what are now the appropriate offerings of piety to the Lord, but that these too will be accepted and had in remembrance.

JESUS BETRAYED TO THE CHIEF PRIESTS.

Ver. 1, 2. 10, 11. 43-52.

After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. —And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.——And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. And they laid their hands on him, and took him. And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as

against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled. And they all forsook him, and fled. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

Immediately after the occurrence which was last considered-the anointing of Jesus by the woman-Judas Iscariot offered his services to the chief priests, in bringing about the design they had formed of putting him to death. On account of the resolution of Judas having been taken, as it would seem, immediately after the Lord's anointing by Mary, some have imputed his treachery to revenge for the open rebuke which his avarice had on that occasion received. He was, as St. John informs us,* the chief person who cavilled at the waste of the ointment; and he did so, we are further told, 'because he was a thief, and kept the bag.' Others have taken this hint of his love of money, and combining it with the fact that he received and bargained for thirty pieces of silver on betraying his Master, have supposed avarice to have been the motive. Both are plausible. And yet, when we come to reflect, the scriptural account will scarcely warrant either supposition. In commending or vindicating Mary, Jesus implied indeed disapprobation of the view, which others, in common with Judas, had taken of her conduct, but his words conveyed no

^{*} John xii. 4, 5, 6.

severity of reproof. It was no rebuke which can be compared with such as all his disciples, at least, had been accustomed to receive, and from the authority with which the Master spoke, to receive as no degradation. Witness that reply to a suggestion made in their zeal for his honour, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;'* and more especially that on another occasion, to Peter, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'† How often did he upbraid them all for want of faith; and continue to be regarded by all, as one removed beyond the sphere of their resentment—as one whose rebuke was not to be received like the insult of their fellows.

Still less satisfactory is the attempt to account for the traitor's deed, by supposing him to have been induced to commit it by the paltry consideration of thirty pieces of silver. For, if he held the bag, and, as it is intimated, was dishonest in his office, he must have been too conscious of sacrificing an established source of gain, to have made the bargain. It is impossible, too. but that our Lord's miracles should have caused in Judas a strong surmise, to say the least, that his Master was the Messiah, and with it the impression that he, as one of his chosen followers, would share largely in the gains and benefits of that kingdom, which all then expected to be a kingdom of this world. The great mass of the Jews, indeed, were unbelievers: but their case was wholly different. To them the miracles of Jesus had been sparingly dis-

^{*} Luke ix. 55.

[†] Matt. xvi. 23.

played; to them he had spoken in parables only, that seeing they might see and not perceive, and · hearing they might hear and not understand and be converted.'* From them he concealed, by the most positive injunctions on others, as well as by his own course of ministry, all that might have forced conviction on them, before their hearts had, like a good soil, been prepared for its reception. But to Judas he had freely given all-instruction, accumulated evidence, all that was usually the reward of docility. Judas was, in the language of prophecy, his 'companion,' his 'own familiar friend,' and had been admitted to that intercourse which precluded the possibility of unbelief. He knew, and must have known, that Jesus was the Christ: and if he considered him as one who would wear an earthly crown, still stronger seems the improbability, that he should betray him for a sum of money which, he might expect, would prove a trifle in the eyes of those his immediate and nearest attendants, amongst whom he had obtained a place. Could the promise of thirty pieces of silver—could a trifling rebuke—have made him resolve to relinquish all the worldly advantages which such a connexion held out? But before any attempt to reply to the question, there is one observation which must be made.

Judas was treated, even as the rest of the apostles, up to the moment of his defection. That he was,

^{*} Mark iv. 12.

[†] Pealm xli. and lv. compared with John xiii. 18.

meanwhile, so ill-disciplined in heart as to be robbing the common purse of his little fraternity, almost certainly denotes, that he had received this favour before he had become 'like a little child'that he was an exception, in short, to the general rule of the Messiah's ministry while on earth, and of the Comforter's dispensation ever since, even until now. It was an exception, which, considered in all its bearings, was sure to be always remembered and recorded; and might, therefore, have been made, and exhibited in a strong light, for the purpose of shewing, that the rule from which it was a departure, was really no limitation to the free mercy of God in In the same manner as Adam's fall proved that the whole human race were incapable of standing without divine assistance added to their natural powers; even so, Judas's case was, perhaps, designed to shew, that if, in the recovery of fallen man, the grace of God were more lavishly dispensed-if His Son while on earth, or His Spirit now, required of us no preparatory frame of heart and mind, we should not be the better for the removal of the apparent restric-To man in tion in the dispensation of divine mercy. that unprepared state of heart the grace of God would be the pearl thrown to swine. It is withheld from man until he is, not indeed deserving of it, but capable of using it.

But, if neither love of money, nor the impulse of resentment, will account for Judas's betrayal of his Master, to what shall we attribute it? Was he then an involuntary agent of Satan? This would be inconsistent with what we know of God's dealings, and with those solemn words of warning, 'The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had never been born.'* -Judas's scheme developes itself only at the closing scene of it. He knew, and must have known, that his Master was the Messiah; but, in common with his fellow-apostles, he believed his destined reign to be a In common with them, he could not temporal one. comprehend how he was to be put to death, and yet to reign and abide for ever in this new theocracy. What then was there that caused so great a difference between the other apostles and him? It was this-they could not understand how all their conflicting hopes and opinions were to be reconciled; but they followed their Master still, in humble faith—even like Abraham proceeding to the place of sacrifice with his childleaving it to God to explain and reconcile, what to them was irreconcilable, incomprehensible. them all, Peter seems to have been the most sorely tempted. Our Lord's especial intercession for him, and his attempt to rescue his Master in the garden of Gethsemane, prove this. But it was Judas only whose faith failed him. He was impatient of the delay and suspense under which he laboured; thought that it was impossible, notwithstanding all his Master's

V. 21.

assurances, that he should be put to death; and roused, no doubt, by the pointed remark on what Mary had done, 'she hath beforehand anointed my body for my burial,' he went out and resolved to bring the matter to an issue. Secure of doing no personal harm to Jesus, he might (consistently with his other views) have supposed, that when the Messiah had extricated himself, by a miracle, from his enemies, this excess of zeal in hastening the crisis would be overlooked, or even applauded. Once resigned to temptation, the very means of grace might have become ruinous to him, as wholesome food is often found injurious to the diseased stomach. When our Lord, at the last supper, said to him, 'That thou doest, do quickly,'* the words, instead of being applied to the searching of his conscience, might have been welcomed as a sanction of his intended negociation with the chief priests, which, then at least, he was sure, was not unknown to Jesus. Such must have been his impression. For could he, after being aware that Jesus knew what he was about, have approached him, in the garden of Gethsemane, with, 'Hail, Master,' and a kiss of friendship and respect, unless he were under a delusion of this sort? Judas's case reminds us of the prophet Balaam. God forbade him to go to Balak; but, eager to be promoted to very great honour, he was discontented under the prohibition, and sought to have it removed. So 'God came unto

^{*} John xiii. 27.

Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up and go with them.'—'And God's anger was kindled, because he went.'* Like the prophet, Judas perversely mistook for a sanction the words which were addressed to his presumptuous obstinacy, 'That thou doest, do quickly.'

But if we would see the whole character of the transaction plainly developed, we must follow the traitor beyond the scene of his treachery, and observe his behaviour, when, to his dismay, he saw Jesus submit to be condemned, and led away for execution. Where was the miracle on which he had confidently The truth then flashed across him: and reckoned? his Master's declaration which he had so often heard and marvelled at, now gave light to scriptural prophecies which he had hitherto wilfully kept out of sight, or misinterpreted. 'I have betrayed the innocent blood, he exclaimed, in allusion to that prophecy which came most home to him. † The thirty pieces of silver he cast away-how could these have tempted him?-and went and hanged himself.

JESUS EATS THE PASSOVER WITH THE TWELVE,

Ver. 12-25.

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go yo into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say

^{*} Numbers xxii. 20-22.

⁺ Psalm xciv. 21.

ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I? And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betraved! good were it for that man if he had never been born. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you. I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until

As the providing the ass on which our Lord's entry was made into Jerusalem was the subject of a miracle, so the providing a room for his eating the last passover with the twelve, seems, from the narrative, to have been connected with some revelation to the master of the guest chamber. Whatever further ends were accomplished by this exercise of miraculous agency, at that time, and on that occasion, it must doubtless have served the purpose of awakening the attention of the disciples, and leading them to expect that something extraordinary would occur at the feast—a feast honoured, even like that of Cana in Galilee, by a divine interposition in the arrangements for it. This

that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

feast did accordingly furnish two remarkable occurrences for Gospel record. The first, which was our Lord's prophetic declaration concerning Judas's betraying him, has been already noticed in the review of the traitor's conduct. The other and the more important, was the institution of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In order to read the narrative of this institution, so as fully to understand its import, we must, in the first place, bear in mind the character of the festival at which Jesus delivered the bread to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body; and the cup of wine, likewise, saying, Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the New Testament. That festival was the Passover. It was commemorative of the deliverance of God's people from Egypt; and it was also typical of that greater deliverance which the Son of God was to accomplish. This we know from sundry passages in the writings of the apostles. Christ is there called 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,'* our Passover,'t and the like. Considering the feast then in this point of view, our Lord's words, connected with that view, naturally imply that he was really what the meat and drink typified—the meat, his body; the wine, his blood. He tells the apostles, 'This is my body;' meaning that it was his body which the eatables had always represented; the original Lamb itself being not the reality, but a shadow of that-

^{*} Revelation xiii. 8.

^{† 1} Cor. v. 7.

174 Jesus eats the Passover with the twelve.

'This is my blood,' i. e., it is my blood which the wine has all along represented; the blood sprinkled on the door posts in Egypt, and hitherto commemorated by this feast, being itself but the shadow, and not the substance. Accordingly, he had, on a previous occasion, told his apostles, 'My flesh is meat indeed,' (i. e., my flesh is the reality typified by the meat of the sacrifice,) and 'my blood is drink indeed,' (i. e., my blood is the reality typified by the blood of the victim.)*

This typical character of the Passover, then, is the first point to be considered. The next is, that, in every sacrifice, there was an accompanying feast—a custom not peculiar to the Jewish rites, but existing throughout the world, wherever sacrifice was practised. The festival of the Passover was of this description—a feast upon a sacrifice. When our Lord, therefore, commanded that a feast, corresponding to it, should be continued, the Christian festival must be considered as the feast upon his sacrifice of himself. As oft as we renew the ceremony, we repeat the feast on the sacrifice, although the sacrifice itself is not repeated; but was once made for the sins of the whole world.

Lastly, putting these two views together, our Christian rite will appear to combine two distinct

^{*} John vi. 55. The use of the word $\partial \lambda \eta \theta \partial s$ in the original expresses this meaning more clearly than the 'indeed' which corresponds to it in the English version.

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objects. First, it expresses, by a significant action, the Christian sacrifice, and is a symbolical record of it. For this purpose the bread is broken, and the wine poured out; the bread representing the body, the wine the blood, of the 'lamb slain from the foundation of the world'—'Christ our Passover,' who was sacrificed for us. Again, the rite is observed as a feast, perpetually renewed, upon the one sacrifice so recorded: and hence it is, that we not only break the bread, but eat it; we not only pour out the wine, but drink it.

Not indeed that even this last mentioned portion of the ceremony is without an emblematic character. Our Lord, it would appear, intended that the visible and sensible reception of the sacramental elements within us, and their conversion into our bodily substance, should be a sign to remind us of that our union with him which is spoken of by St. Paul as 'Christ in us' 'quickening our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us.'* Accordingly, he, on one occasion told his disciples, that he was 'the life;' and on another, 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.' ‡

This last remark leads me to notice also our Lord's declaration, 'Verily I say unto you, that I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' That kingdom of God was, no doubt, his Gospel kingdom on earth. The sacramental wine drunk in that kingdom would

^{*} Rom. viii. 9—11. † John xiv. 6. ‡ John vi. 53.

receive a new character and efficacy from his death. But what are we to understand by his then drinking it? He never partook afterwards of the Passover; never, that we know of, celebrated the Eucharist with his disciples. It is said, indeed, that, after his resurrection, He was known to two of them 'in breaking of bread,'* but this can hardly be what is meant. His words are, perhaps, designed to make us feel, that when we celebrate that holy feast in faith, He is not the less really with us, because his presence is unseen, and only spiritual.

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

Ver. 26-42.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee. That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice. thou shalt deny me thrice. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed. and to be very heavy; and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee: take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will.

^{. *} Luke xxiv. 35.

but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

From the last supper our Lord proceeds with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and, in his way thither, he foretells their general desertion of him, and appoints Galilee as the place where they were to meet him after that mysterious event-his rising from the dead. This prophetic declaration called forth a strong protest from the disciples-from Peter especially-that, rather than forsake him, they would die with him-a protest which the remainder of the narrative shews to have been as feebly maintained in the case of Peter as of the rest. His and their desertion of their Master will be more intelligible, if we examine the record of what occurred, soon after, in the garden of Gethsemane, and what Peter, James, and John were now especially selected to witness. Considering the long and steady devotion of the apostles to Jesus, their personal attachment to him, as well as their faith in him, (now put beyond a doubt by the accumulated evidence of miracles continued up to that very day,) it requires certainly more than the

common failing of human nature observable in mankind, to account for the denial of him by one, and the denial of him implied by the conduct of all, within a few hours after so sincere and hearty an avowal of their constancy, and so solemn a warning of the trial to which it would be exposed. Let us see whether this portion of the narrative will furnish anything that may account for it.

Our Lord's own part in what took place in the garden of Gethsemane, is, perhaps, the most mysterious, solemn, and affecting picture in his history. cross itself, and amidst the sufferings and insults of the hour of atonement, he exhibits the placid composure of triumph. Death was there, indeed, embittered by much that is mysterious, awful, and overpowering, and by infinitely more, we feel, than man can appreciate or comprehend; but his words, and his whole behaviour, betoken, that when he came to the cross, he had already gone through a struggle with human weakness, which fitted and prepared him for that last trial. In the garden of Gethsemane, he appears to have undergone his especial preparation for that hour. There, it would seem, was made the final renewal of the temptation which commenced with his retirement into the wilderness, before his ministry began. When that was ended, we are expressly told, that Satan departed from him 'for a season;'* and that this was one and the great period

^{*} Luke iv. 13.

of his return, not only the circumstances of the narrative indicate, but, taken in connection with these, the many allusions made by Jesus, on this occasion, to the extraordinary exertions of the Tempter. his arrival at Gethsemane, and after the Passover had been kept, he reminded his apostles, that they were the persons 'who had continued with him in his temptations;'* as if arming them to abide the last which they were to share with him, as his friends and coadjutors, and against which, in that capacity more especially, he had taught them to pray, 'Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one.' A little after their arrival at the scene of trial, + he warned them all now to use the appointed prayer, 'Pray that we enter not into temptation.' All were admonished of Satan's desire to have them that he may sift them as wheat; and Peter knew that an extraordinary trial awaited him, from the intercession which the Lord told him that he had made especially for him. To those, lastly, who, under the guidance of Judas Iscariot, came into the garden to apprehend him, his words were, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.'

The same impression is left by the account of what He underwent. 'He began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy,' is a description which accords with no other moment of his life. The words, too, 'Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away

^{*} Luke xxii. 28. † Luke xxii. 39. ‡ Luke xxii. 53.

this cup from me'—what an agony of soul they convey! Scarcely less affecting is his request to Peter, James, and John, to tarry with him; as if even their weak presence was a comfort to him in that tremendous hour of trial. 'My soul' saith he unto them, is 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch.'

This is a view of our great Example on which it is profitable for us to dwell. In our reverential contemplation of his human perfections, we may be led to overlook the important fact, that they were not the result even of his original human nature left to itself, but as it was influenced and perfected by the same holy comfort which he has imparted to all his disciples. He 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'* The tears which fell on the grave of Lazarus flowed from the same source, out of which, in unregenerate man, springs weak repining or sullen discontent; his unwearied industry in 'doing good't was but that, which the miser or the ambitious man perverts to other ends; and the calm fortitude with which he endured insult; pain, and death, was formed out of the very same qualities, which, ungoverned and misdirected, brought the guilty robber to a cross by his The materials were all human and our own, the workmanship alone divine. And is the Lord's arm shortened? will not the same God that worketh in us also, enable us, like him, perfectly to will and to

[·] Hebrews iv. 15.

[†] Acts x. 38.

do of his good pleasure, if only the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus? It is true, indeed, that to us the Holy Spirit is given by measure; still that measure is a measure of grace sufficient for us. It is true, that it is given in a way which can never make the Christian as his Lord is, both God and man; but, still, the moulding of human nature into the highest perfection of which it is capable, is one promised result of that gift; and it is enough for the disciple that he be, in this respect, as his Master, and the servant as his Lord.

JESUS BEFORE THE JEWISH SANHEDRIM.

Ver. 53--65.

And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death: and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and, within three days, I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and we shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further

witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

At this period of the Jewish history, the great council of the nation, before whom our Lord was now brought, had not the power of passing sentence of death. The decision of capital causes was in Judæa, as in the other provinces of the empire, reserved for the Roman tribunal. But still, the Sanhedrim was long permitted to exercise a limited jurisdiction over all Jews, abroad, it would seem, as well as at home.*

It was confined to 'questions of their Law,' and, on such a question, Jesus was now brought before them.

For the origin of the charge made against him we must refer to the second chapter of St. John,† where it is recorded of him, that, according to his usual method of hinging instruction on present scenes and passing occurrences, whilst he was teaching in the Temple, he spoke of his body as a temple which should be destroyed, and raised again, by his own power, within the third day. The words therefore laid to his charge might have been, and probably were, literally such as he had used. The falsehood of the

[•] See Acts, chap. ix., where Saul is described as applying to the high priest for 'letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

[†] Ver. 19.

evidence lay in the misapplication of them. Jesus had spoken of the temple of his body, as the Evangelist remarks; the witnesses gave in their evidence as if he meant the Jewish temple of stone. Hence it was, no doubt, that their evidence could not be made to agree; because each false witness would, probably enough, add something more which might go to prove the criminal meaning of those words—that they were so spoken, namely, as to apply to the holy building at Jerusalem. Even so, we Christians—and it is a serious and fearful consideration-may be quoting the words of divine truth, the very language of our Lord, and yet be guilty of false evidence. When, like the Jewish witnesses, we first frame a position, and then seek for texts of Scripture to support it, and apply these only in reference to the view predetermined on; are we not Nay, did not Satan himself doing even the same? do the like? The arguments by which he sought to shake our Lord's constancy were texts of Scripture; then, now, in every period, not only 'unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness,' but to those too, who being 'called' neglect their calling, and by wisdom know not God.*

It was, probably, owing to the conflicting testimony of the witnesses, that our Lord's real application of the expression was elicited, and that his judges were led to change their ground of inquiry, and to ask him, 'Art thou the Christ?' In calling his body the Temple,

^{* 1} Cor. i. 21-24.

(they meant to ask,) did he imply that God resided therein and attached his manifestation thereto, as in that edifice strictly so called? If so, he must assert himself to be the Immanuel, the Christ, whom the prophets declared should be even such an one, 'God with us.' Such would seem to be the turn which the inquiry took; and, accordingly, when, in answer to the question, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' he replied in the affirmative, they charged him with direct blasphemy. As forming designs against the Temple, and endangering the city, he was, they thought, amenable to their tribunal, and might also be made accountable before the Roman authorities. But in asserting that he was God, a new source of accusation, more palpably the object of prosecution, is presented to them. Had they possessed the power of life and death, they would forthwith have condemned him to be stoned; but this power they had not. Great and horrible as his crime seemed in their eyes, it involved only a question of their law, and how were they to render his case one of capital offence, and cognizable by the Roman magistrate?

The Messiah had been represented in their prophecies as their God and their King; and literally as a temporal king the Jewish nation and their teachers expected him. The means therefore of bringing Jesus before the Roman governor's tribunal were obvious; and, indeed, such an occasion had been, again and again, sought for. Whilst amongst themselves, they dwelt on the blasphemy implied by his pretending to

be the Messiah, that person being considered as the Immanuel; we shall find them, before Pilate, imputing treason to him, as implied in the other character of the Messiah, his being a king. He claimed to be the God of the Jews—and they had a law, and by that law he was worthy of death. He claimed to be the king of the Jews—and no loyal Roman, no 'friend to Cæsar,' would let him escape. This was their case against him.

It is remarkable that the Jews should thus have rejected Jesus, for the want of the signs of temporal royalty; and yet have made his accusation before Pilate rest on his pretension to it. In short, they accused him of doing that, which had he done, they would have welcomed him, risen in his behalf, and died for him. They not only 'laid to his charge things that he knew not;'* but a crime, the commission of which was all that was wanting to have secured him their favour and support.

PETER DENIES JESUS.

Ver. 66-72.

And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch: and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after,

^{*} Psalm xxxv. 11.

they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilæan, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cook crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

Viewing our Lord's agony in the garden of Gethsemane as an especial trial and temptation, in which Satan was exerting his mysterious power against Him and his apostles, we may readily understand the failure of their constancy, and more particularly the denial of Peter, even of Peter, who certainly wanted neither faith nor courage. It was Peter who first confessed Jesus to be the Christ, and was on that account honourably distinguished by his Master. It was Peter who braved the risk of interfering in his behalf when he was apprehended. And yet, of all his followers, it was Peter who denied him.

Powerful indeed must have been the agency of the Tempter to effect that denial. Nor are we without some clue to the state of mind which exposed the apostle to Satanic agency. It was, in some respects, not unlike that of Judas Iscariot. He was anticipating the Messiah's kingdom as a temporal kingdom. To this view tended his thoughts and desires. At a very early period of his apostleship, our Lord rebuked him, saying, 'Get thee behind me, Satan;' words which, however severe they might have seemed at the time, were proved, by the after-trial of the apostle, to be a merciful warning,—the more severe the more

merciful, because, the more likely to sink deep into his mind, and to prepare him for this his more perilous temptation. To the last he had looked, it would seem, for some miraculous interposition in behalf of Jesus; the disappointment of this hope was the trial, through which his faith was most likely to fail. Confident that his Master was to be rescued, he 'Put up thy sword,' drew his sword in his defence. said Jesus; he obeyed, nothing doubting that Jesus had defence he knew not of. His faith wavered not But when his Master stood before the high priest, was condemned, and still no heavenly rescue appeared—when he evidently shewed by his manner that he meant to submit to death—the apostle's mind was wrought to the highest pitch of dismay. could not comprehend the event. Against faith he, for the moment, desponded, and, in that bewildered state of mind, denied his Master. But, unlike Judas, he was still a little child of that same Lord who had Jesus turned and looked upon prayed for him. him. Oh that we all could fancy ourselves, in the many temptations of life, turning to meet that look! As when he stretched out his hand, and at the same moment snatched Peter from the waves of Genesareth into which he was sinking, and rebuked him for his want of faith;* so he now at once saved him, and reproved him, by a look. It was only a look; but it was more expressive than words.

^{*} Matt. xiv. 31.

converted him, it saved him. Henceforth his Lord's strength was made perfect in his weakness, and enabled him to fulfil the command which he had received from him, 'when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.'* He it was who first preached Jesus to the Jews; and it is remarkable, that the sum of his discourse was the very point which seems to have constituted his own former difficulty and trial—the doctrine on which his own faith was so near being shipwrecked. 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'†

^{*} Luke xxii. 32.

[†] Acts ii. 36.

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

Ver. 1-15.

And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again, Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? and they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him. to be crucified.

WHAT share had Pilate in the guilt of Christ's crucifixion? This need be only so far made a subject of inquiry as to ascertain, whether there be

any ground in Scripture for asserting that he was the involuntary and unconscious perpetrator of so great a Certainly, it would have been at variance crime. with what we know of the course of divine providence that it should have been so. From time to time, the history of the Church, and of the world, furnishes instances of persons who, through their very crimes, were made the means of bringing about some of the designs of Providence, and who are even said to be raised up by Him for these purposes. Such, among many, was the king of Babylon, who led the Israelites into captivity. But, in no instance, does the free agency of the instrument appear to have received any extraordinary impulse or check, either from the immediate interposition of God, or from the circumstances under which the event was accomplished. case, our natural conclusion is, that God chose the instrument, because He foresaw the suitableness of his character, not that he made his instrument of that character in accommodation to the event to be accom-In Pilate's case, especially, this will plished by it. be very evident, if we attend to one or two circumstances in the combined narrative of the four Evangelists.

First, then, his wife received a divine warning through a dream, which she communicated to her husband. That a Gentile should receive a revelation from God, and of this particular kind, too, is nothing at variance with what Scripture tells us of his dealings with man. To individuals of the heathen world, and

not only to his own people, He spoke in dreams-to Pharaoh of old, even as now to Pilate's wife. Probably. in all these cases, the persons so visited must have had the dream confirmed by a further miraculous sign; else it would have tended, one would think, to encourage a superstitious interpretation of ordinary dreams, already too prevalent in the heathen world: Besides which, the person visited by a dream would (if exempt from such superstition) have naturally neglected to act upon its suggestions, and would have been justified in so doing. By appending some miraculous sign, then, to these occasional dreams, God might have given an instructive hint to the Gentile. whereby he would see at once the distinction between those ordinary dreams to which he had hitherto given superstitious credence, and a dream accompanied by its appropriate test. The silence of the historian respecting this sign would be no proof that it was not given; for, if it were the long-established and invariable rule respecting inspired dreams, the mention of it would, on that very account, be the more likely to be omitted. But, however this might be, Pilate's wife was warned by God in a dream, and, through her, Pilate himself.

Secondly, there is much reason to believe, that Pilate must have made sufficient inquiry into the character of Jesus, and into the crime laid to his charge, not only to have ascertained that he was 'a good and just man,' but that he was a very marvellous and mysterious person. He evidently wished to save his life; and, when at length he yielded to the

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demands of the chief priests; by a significant action he disclaimed all share in the guilt of his condemnation. The question he put to Jesus, too, 'Art thou a king?' connected with the inscription on the cross, and his appeal to the Jews whether they would crucify their king, all indicate some information obtained by Pilate respecting the Jewish hope of a Messiah, and some impression made on his own mind by it. That he should make some inquiry, the lowest view of the administration of justice seems to imply; and that, from the accusers themselves, he should receive much information, if only by way of explaining what could have induced the criminal to pretend to be a king, is almost If, with this information, his own less precertain. judiced mind should have led him to suspect that the Jews had failed to recognize their Messiah; how greatly would this feeling be increased by the presence of the Lord Jesus-his dignified composure-his firmness in asserting his kingdom-and his unaccountable resignation to death, as if death itself could not interfere with its establishment, 'Knowest thou not, said the astonished Roman, that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?'* There was enough, in short, about the prisoner's case to have awakened a candid mind to further investigation: there would have been enough furnished by that investigation, to have made one possessed of the candour to inquire, a disciple; and Pilate might have

[#] John xix. 10.

become the apostle, instead of the murderer, of the Saviour. But there was, in his case, the same or a similar blindness with that which darkened the view of the Jews; and which still, under infinite varieties, darkens the view of every man, until he submits a docile and humble mind to the inquiry after the truth. If he believed, even like Judas, that a prophetic king of all the earth stood before him, still it was easier for him to put the question to the test, by delivering him to the Jews for them to attempt to crucify him, and providing a salvo for himself, by an indolent effort to save him, and a formal washing of his hands, than by patient and humble inquiry, in the face of opposition and calumny, to expose himself to the charge of being no friend to Cæsar, and endanger his fortune and his very life. That he had some doubts, at least, whether the Jews would be able to accomplish the desired crucifixion, even after his permission was given for it to take place, may be inferred, perhaps, from his expression of surprise on being told that Jesus was dead. When Joseph of Arimathæa came to demand of him the body, (of course implying that the body was lifeless), he was astonished, 'he marvelled if he were already dead;' nor would he believe, until he had called the centurion on duty, and questioned him whether he was surely dead-whether it had taken place so long as to leave no doubt of it.* Did he, at that moment, call to mind our Lord's reply to him, at

[#] Εἰ πάλαι ἀπέθανε.

the time when his mind was painfully wavering, as it would seem, between truth and error, 'My kingdom is not of this world; were my kingdom of this world, then would my servants fight for me?'* When we read these words, bearing in mind all that is besides related of the part Pilate took in the transaction, it does really look as if the Lord perceived the thoughts of his heart, and had stretched out his arm to save him, but had been rejected. Pilate was not sure that Jesus was the King expected, and he wanted those qualities which would have enabled him to make himself sure. But still he inscribed on his cross the title 'the King of the Jews;' which could not have been from joining in the insults of the Jews, for they disliked it, and he refused to erase it when they requested him. He appealed to them, too, in behalf of Jesus, by calling him their king; which he would hardly have done, if he had desired to save his life merely on the ground of his being a deluded but innocent man. But wavering, and irresolute, and desirous only of escaping risk; when these efforts proved unavailing, he formally washed his hands of the guilt, if guilt it should prove; and having thus, as he supposed, steered the prudent course, he waited the result. So much doubt, however, remained, it would seem, on his mind, as to make him refuse credence to any but the centurion, that the crucified man was dead.

^{*} John xviii. 36.

The death of Jesus was a result, which, no doubt, left him satisfied (as it did the major part of the Jewish nation) that his surmises respecting his claim to be the promised king of the Jews were unfounded; and he was even less likely than before to pay any attention to the preaching of Christ's followers, or to the account of the resurrection. His test had been applied, and his mind was, probably, henceforth made up. He did not, indeed, continue very much longer procurator of Judæa. His mal-administration of the province led to his recall and banishment, from which he never returned. His end was that of Judas—suicide.

JESUS BEFORE HEROD.

Luke xxiii. 6-11.

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

That Jesus was sent by Pilate to Herod, and returned by Herod to Pilate's tribunal, after having been dealt with as is related in this Scripture, we learn from St. Luke, and St. Luke only. In the same Evangelist's report of the Christian Assembly's words

of praise and gladness, which they addressed to the Lord, on Peter and John being dismissed by the Jewish Council, reference is made to it. 'Of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.*

The Herod here spoken of was the son of that Herod who was king of Judea when Jesus was born. On his father's death, and the subsequent division of his father's kingdom, Galilee fell to his portion. Jesus was, therefore, said to belong to his jurisdiction.

Pilate's object in making the reference to him, was, apparently, to relieve himself of the responsibility, of either condemning one whom he knew to be innocent, or acquitting one who was obnoxious to the people. Herod would not accept the responsibility so thrown on him; but, having entertained himself and his military attendants with ridiculing the supposed pretensions of Jesus to royalty, sent him back to Pilate. Pilate, being thus forced to decide for himself, made some weak attempts, as we have seen, to save Jesus; but finally yielded to popular clamour, and committed him to a guard of soldiers to be taken to the Cross.

JESUS ON HIS WAY TO THE CROSS.

Ver. 15-23.

And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. And the soldiers led him

^{*} Acts iv. 27.

away into the hall, called Prætorium; and they called together the whole band. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head, and began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had worshipped him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross. And they bring him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not.

In the preceding portions of the narrative, we were told how Jesus was dealt with by those in authoritythe men of power and rank. He had been before the Sanhedrim, or great Council of the Jewish nation; before Herod, who may be regarded as the representative of the last race of Judæa's kings; and before Pilate, the heathen Governor. The Sanhedrim pronounced him guilty, but did not, because they could not, order him to be put to death; Pilate pronounced him innocent, but consented to his death whilst Herod treated him with merriment and contempt, as though his case was not worthy of a serious tribunal. We now see how he was dealt with by another description of persons—the common soldiery and the Jewish people. Thus all orders and degrees of men, Jews and Gentiles, rulers and ruled. had their several shares in the guilt of bringing the Saviour to his mysterious doom. How strange and sad the picture which Scripture now sets before us!

especially if, while we look at it, we glance back at the earlier portion of his history—at the narrative of his nativity, when a multitude of the heavenly host heralded his coming into the world, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men,' *--or at that of his infancy, when Simeon, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, took him up in his arms, and described him as 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of God's people Israel.' But so it was: it was necessary that he should be rejected and put to death, in order that he may glorify God, manifest his goodwill towards man, and be our peace, and a light to lighten every man that cometh into the world.1 orders and degrees of men had their share in the guilt of his death: but none of them knew what it was that they were doing. Even as men who commit crime when drunk, know not what they do, but are guilty of having brought themselves into that blinded condition, in which they ignorantly commit the crime, and incur its penalty; so was it with the several parties concerned in the death of Jesus. So, indeed, is it with all and each of us, when we commit any sin. never know all that is involved in it. We know but in part either its intrinsic evil, or its effects in generating further evil. Thus was it with our first parents, when they sinned the original sin: thus is it with all who have inherited their fallen nature. Ponder we on all

[•] Luke ii. 13, 14. † Luke ii. 27-32. ‡ John i. 9.

the meaning of those words of the Saviour on his Cross, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'*

JESUS ON HIS CROSS.

Ver. 25, 26.

And it was the third hour, and they crucified him. And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Crucifixion was a terrible death—a death of protracted suffering, and a death of ignominy. the doom of the worst and the vilest criminals. Saviour's cross has divested it of the latter character. Instead of associations of shame and degradation which once attached to it, our associations with it are holy and exalted. Nor is this all the change which has taken place in popular impressions of Crucifixion. We are wont to look at his, in particular, through a deceptive medium—a medium of imaginative genius, taste, and refinement—and to picture it to ourselves as we see it on the painter's canvass, and in the graven image. All there is solemn and elevating; nothing is mean and humiliating. Ought we not, however, to strive to think of his crucifixion as it really was-the infliction of death by a rude and barbarous process, with nothing ennobling in it, nothing but what was disgusting and degrading to humanity? Such was the cross, of which St. Paul speaks, when he says that Jesus endured it, 'despising the shame.' †

[#] Luke xxiii. 34.

[†] Hebrews xii. 2.

Of his sufferings the Sacred writers give us no description. There is no awakening of our human sympathies with the sufferer. Not such was the purpose of their Scripture narratives. Yet how affecting is the idea of those sufferings which is incidentally conveyed to us by the words of Jesus, after his resurrection, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands!'*—those hands which were scarred by the nails that had been driven through them, by way of fastening him to the stake, where he was left to die in lingering pain.

What an overpowering mystery!—that thus atonement was made for the sins of the whole world!—that by these stripes we are healed! When we think of Calvary and the cross thereon, the words of Jacob concerning another holy spot of earth, may well rise to our lips, 'How dreadful is this place!—this is the gate of Heaven!'†

THE EJACULATION ON THE CROSS.

Ver. 34-37.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, he calleth Elias. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

^{*} John xx. 27.

[†] Genesis xxviii. 17.

The words uttered by our Saviour on the cross are from the beginning of the twenty-second Psalm. Of all the Scriptures the Psalms appear to have been most frequently quoted by our Lord, and, it is probable, by the Jews generally. As has been observed already, more than once, they occupied in their literature that place, which national songs and works of mere amusement occupy in the literature of all other nations. Indeed, one main purpose for which these beautiful compositions were designed by the Holy Spirit who made them Scripture, (the remark applies still more to the Song of Solomon,) might have been that particular cultivation of mind, which would qualify the Jews at large to be hearers of the Messiah. The Jews had no literature besides their Scriptures; and it would seem, that, by these portions of Holy Writ, more especially, the popular mind was made familiar with expressions and habits of thought, which became, in the fulness of time, a ready medium for Gospel instruction.

Jesus, on the Cross itself, applies to his own case words of the Psalmist, written on some occasion of great distress. Literally the words imply a desertion by the Almighty of the complainant, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' nor can there be any reason for attempting to force on them, in our Saviour's application of them to himself, a less obvious exposition, and to make them merely expressive of excessive anguish of spirit.* Indeed, there is,

^{*} See Bishop Portrus's Lectures on St. Matthew, Lecture xxii.

if we reflect, much reason against adopting this Jesus throughout his ministry, was, in various view. ways, declaring his divine nature. He was also, as continually speaking of God as 'his God;' e. g. 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'* Now, in like manner, he addresses Him most emphatically, 'My God, my God,' as if implying, that some divine assistance, which was not afforded, might have saved him from that hour. In short, Jesus sometimes spoke as if God were speaking, on other occasions his language is that of a He has thus guarded us from falling into either of two erroneous views of him, to which we were liable. Had he always spoken as God, his body, and much more the nobler qualities of his human mind, might have been regarded as a part of the Divine nature, and man himself, to a certain extent, the literal image and counterpart of his Creator. Had he always spoken of God as his God as well as ours, he might have appeared to us only like any other inspired messenger of God. His character as the Immanuel: the union of the divine with the human nature, which rendered the latter perfectly good and holy, and fitted it for its part in the great mystery of

^{*} John xx. 17. Dr. Arnold has remarked,—'He never addressed God but by the title of Father, except in those memorable words on the cross, when for our sakes he endured that God should hide his countenance from him, and called upon him, not as his Father, but as his God who had forsaken him.'—Sermon xxx. p. 361.

the redemption; all this would have been concealed under a veil; and all this, we are sure, it is requisite for us to have known, whatever parts of the wonderful scheme of grace may be hidden from us in this our stage of trial and earthly darkness. On the cross, and in death itself, he was still the Immanuel; but it was not God who suffered, God who died. He expressed, in the words of the Psalmist, suffering beyond mere man's endurance, and which possessed an efficacy that belongs not to mere human suffering; but it was the man Christ Jesus who so endured for our sakes, and by whose stripes we are healed.

THE TWO MALEFACTORS WHO WERE CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS.

Ver. 27, 28, 32.

And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

The two malefactors who were crucified with Jesus are here called thieves. The original word, however, which is so translated in our English Bibles, does not mean thieves, but robbers. Our Lord's being associated with these criminals in his death was, as the Evangelist instructs us, divinely foretold, 'The Scripture was fulfilled which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.'* He who was 'holy, harmless, un-

^{*} Isaiah liii. 12.

defiled, separate from sinners, ** was numbered with those who transgress against the law both of God and of man; he who was 'meek and lowly in heart, † who 'was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, † was numbered with ruffian banditti, whose 'feet are swift to shed blood.'§

According to St. Mark, and St. Matthew also, these fellow-sufferers of our Lord railed at him. The Evangelists, however, must be understood as expressing themselves generally, and not as meaning that both the malefactors reviled him. St. Luke is more explicit, and tells us that

One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

The application of this part of the narrative to two different classes of sinners, is clear. In accordance with the general tenor of Gospel teaching, we may learn from it, that the sinner who turns to the Saviour with repentance and faith, will be saved through the efficacy of his Cross; not the scoffing and impenitent sinner. The specific application of it to cases of

^{*} Heb. vii. 26. † Matth. xi. 29. ‡ Isaiah lii. 7. § Rom. iii. 15. || Luke xxiii. 30—43.

death-bed repentance and faith, is more questionable; and, if allowable at all, can only be so when made with certain reservations and limitations. For, in the first place, we are not sure that the penitent malefactor's repentance and faith began on his cross, so as to make the parallel, in this respect, correct. remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom, were words which indicate a maturity of faith beyond any to which the apostles themselves had, at that time, attained-faith, not only in Jesus as the Messiah, but that death itself would be no bar to his coming into his kingdom. Was the knowledge on which this faith was founded only derived from the title on the Saviour's Cross, and the insulting jeers of those around it? Are we to suppose that he who could reconcile the coming glories of the Messiah's reign with a doom which extinguished all hope of it in others, had his faith begun and perfected amidst the terrors and distractions of the Crucifixion? Granting that this might be so; Jesus, who accepted the penitent sinner, could estimate, without the fruits of repentance in after life, the sincerity and strength of his conversion; we cannot presume to do so, either in our own case, or in another's. Add to this, that Scripture furnishes no information concerning the penitent's previous history, and what opportunities of light and amendment, up to that time, he had and neglected, or never had. then, can we draw a parallel between his condition, as he hung on his cross, and that of any other dying man?

It may be observed, in passing, that our Lord did not, in respect of either of these men, anticipate that final judgment which is to be pronounced on us all. To the penitent sinner his words were 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise—not in Heaven, but in Paradise. Concerning the impenitent sinner, he was silent. To the questioner who asks, respecting his fellow sinner, 'What shall this man do?' what shall be his final doom? the answer is, 'What is that to thee?'* 'Work out thine own salvation with fear and trembling.'† 'God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained;'‡ 'and then shall He reward every man according to his works.'§

THE WITNESSES OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

The Multitude. The Soldiers. Friends and Disciples of Jesus.

Ver. 29-32. 40, 41.

And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.—There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

^{*} John xxi. 21, 22.

[†] Philip. ii. 12.

[‡] Acts xvii. 31.

[§] Matth. xvi. 27.

This Scripture directs our attention, which, in the sections immediately preceding, has been fixed on the cross itself of Jesus, and the two crosses which stood, one on each side of it, to what took place below and There was a great crowd. That crowd about them. was not composed wholly of the rabble. In it were chief priests, and scribes, and elders. All these came 'to see the sight;' and to deride and revile him. This they had done in his way to the cross, and this they continued to do whilst he was hanging in agony on it. Yet even these, or those of them who remained to the last, eventually felt the power of that cross, and 'smote their breasts and returned.' opposite to it stood the centurion, with an escort of soldiers, to whose charge Jesus had been committed. Taking their tone from the multitude, these, too, made cruel sport of their prisoner. But on them also a mighty change was wrought, as will be noticed more particularly in a future reading. When death reigned on that cross, all who were in its presence felt its influence. A preternatural gloom was darkening the heavens above them, and the ground on which they stood shook with a preternatural tremor; but it was not the earthquake alone, or the eclipse, which was changing their mood, and working conviction in them; it was the cross and what was passing there. Scoffing and reviling were hushed before it. It brought home to the consciences of the Jewish multitude the awful conviction, that the blood, which they had invoked on themselves and on their children, was 'the innocent blood; ** and it at once rebuked and enlightened the Gentile soldiers. The Jew smote his breast, and departed; the heathen became a believer. If the impenitent malefactor was an exception—if he remained impenitent and unmoved to the last—hard indeed must his heart have been.

These were not the only witnesses of the crucifixion. Some, of a different description from all these, were likewise present-friends and disciples of In the garden of Gethsemane, his apostles had forsaken him, and fled. But one of their number, if no more, stood by his cross. A company of women, also, who had devoted themselves to attendance on him, whilst he was in Galilee, not only were present at the crucifixion, but, regardless of injury or insult from the rabid multitude and the ribald soldiery, had followed him, all the way from Pilate's judgment hall to Calvary, weeping and bewailing him as they went. One of these women was his mother. At one period, at least, she was, with some of them, close to the very cross. St. Mark tells us, indeed, in the portion of his narrative which has just been read, that these women were 'looking on afar off.' Matthew and St. Luke say the same. This, however, must have been at a later hour. That she and some of the party were, at one time, near the cross, John, who was there also, expressly states. deeply interesting narrative of what occurred, in

^{*} Psalm xciv. 21 compared with Matth. xxvi. 4.

reference both to her and himself, will occupy the next section of our readings. As St. Mark, in common with St. Matthew and St. Luke, omits all mention of it, we must supply the omission from the Gospel of that Evangelist who was himself a witness of what he relates.

THE WITNESSES OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

The Mother of Jesus and the Disciple whom Jesus loved.

John xix. 25-27.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Maternal affection brought Mary to the cross, and sustained her through all the appalling circumstances in which she stood there, close to the sufferer, as if even her weak presence might be some comfort and support to him in that dreadful hour. Filial affection, not less strong, is evidenced by the farewell words of Jesus to her and his beloved disciple. When death removed him from the world, when his Ascension marked his return to Heaven, how would that mother be venerated, and cared for, by those who had loved Jesus to the last, and now recognised him as God in Christ! How many would resort to her to hear from her lips the oft-repeated tales of his childhood and

youth; or, if it were only to look on her, and call her blessed! Why has inspired wisdom thrown a veil over all this? Why, but to prevent our regarding that mother in a false light? Why, but to remove all ground, or apparent ground, for that adoration which a large section of the Christian world, even as it is, pays to her-making her a second Intercessor, although God's word declares that there is but 'one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;'* and ascribing to her that glory which God the Saviour gives not to another. Three days only, and her crucified son rises from the tomb. What was that joyful mother's share in the glad triumph of his resurrection? Scripture tells us that he appeared first to Mary Magdalene; afterwards to a company of women; but nothing of any interview between him and his mother. Was she present at the glorious spectacle of his Ascension? Did she receive from him then any special token of recognition? Scripture is silent-silent concerning her after-life; silent concerning her own dying hour. And is not that silence a comment on the words of Jesus, when one told him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him; 'but he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For, whosoever shall do the will of

^{* 1} Tim. ii. 5.

my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother!'*—and on his manner of replying to her, when, apparently, she was busying herself in reference to the beginning of his miracles, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'†

Blessed was Mary's lot, although the cross was, indeed, a sword that pierced through her soul;‡ and blessed shall her memory be through all our generations; but blessed, in our thinking of her as Scripture instructs us to think, not in making her the subject of 'blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits.'

THE WITNESSES OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

The Centurion and the Guard of Soldiers.

Ver. 39.

And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.

The impression made on the soldiers by what they saw and heard on the cross has been already briefly noticed. They had conducted Jesus to it with mockery and insult, and, for a time, they continued to behave thus unfeelingly and brutally towards him, as they stood watching him on the cross itself. We now read of the marvellous change which was wrought in them. The Evangelist tells us that the centurion 'when he saw that he so cried out and gave up the

^{*} Matth. xii. 46—50. † John ii. 4. ‡ Luke ii. 35.

ghost, said, Truly this man was the Son of God.' From St. Matthew* we learn that all the soldiers felt and expressed themselves in the like manner. cording to St. Luke the words were 'Certainly this was a righteous man,'t or one unjustly condemned. Both exclamations must, therefore, have been uttered, and both express the same conviction concerning He had been condemned, and was hanging on the cross, because he had claimed to be the Son of This claim he openly maintained to the last. God. His dying words emphatically assert it. If, then, he was a 'righteous man,' and unjustly condemned, this assertion that he was the Son of God was true; and if this assertion was true, he was unjustly condemned. So that the two expressions were, in reference to the conviction and faith wrought in the centurion and the soldiers, equivalent, and meant the same thing. It was only the difference between saying of one condemned on a certain charge, that he is innocent, and saying, in express terms, that he did not commit such and such a crime; or that he did fulfil such and such a duty, for the neglect of which he had been con-In this very language Pilate's wife sent her warning to her husband, in consequence of a dream which had divinely informed her of the justice of his wonderful prisoner's cause. 'Have thou nothing to do with that just man.' ‡

But what, it may be asked, was the result, on the cen-

^{*} Chap. xxvii. 54. † Luke xxiii. 47. ‡ Matth. xxvii. 19.

turion himself and his comrades, of the testimony thus borne by them to Jesus? Did he, or they, or any of them, carry away in the impression made by the cross the seeds of Gospel faith? At that cross itself they were not ashamed to confess their faith in Christ crucified. Did all, or any of them, go forth to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue his faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end? We may hope that it was so; but God's Word is silent. Omissions on points such as this, make us aware that Scripture was not of man's authorship; forasmuch as it is not written as man writes, to gratify even innocent curiosity.

It is to be observed, that the New Testament narratives, in the several periods which they embrace, bring under our notice soldiers especially, as affected by deep religious impressions. It was of a centurion that the Lord Jesus said, he had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* Cornelius, another centurion, was the first Christian convert from the Gentile world, bringing with him into the Church his whole household; and one, at least, of the soldiers under him had been, previously, like Cornelius himself, 'a devout man.'†

By this expression 'devout,' and that of 'fearing God,' as applied to the Heathen or Gentiles, is meant that they belonged to that portion of the Gentile world who were so far enlightened as to believe in the one

^{*} Luke vii. 9.

[†] Acts x. 7.

true God. Possibly the Centurion at the Cross, and some of those with him, may have been likewise Gentiles of this class, and may have applied to Jesus the title of 'the Son of God,' not as men ignorant of Him, to whom the holy sufferer cried, in words which so deeply impressed them, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.' However this may have been, certain it is, that, among worldly callings, there is no one which Scripture exhibits to us more strikingly, as compatible with faith and piety, than that of the soldier.

SUPERNATURAL OCCURRENCES IN CONNEXION WITH THE CRUCIFIXION.

Ver. 33, 38.

And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.——And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Messiah, that he was to be known by opening the eyes of the blind, and healing all manner of disease and infirmity, was fulfilled in two ways. It was fulfilled literally by the miracles which Jesus wrought in attestation of his divine mission; and it was fulfilled figuratively, but not less truly, by his healing men of spiritual blindness, of spiritual infirmity, and of moral corruption. The cure of the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the lepers, must have made men think of this prophecy; the miraculous character of these cures gave assurance

that it was fulfilled in them; and, from time to time, a more important fulfilment was developed, by Christ's so alluding to the miracles, and the prophecies, as to give the one a symbolical, the other a metaphorical, import.

In like manner Joel's prophecy concerning the change from the old to the new theocracy,* was expressed in language, the import of which was, doubtless, metaphorical; for it was the language of prophecy, when describing revolutions, whether civil or religious. Still, as this far exceeded in importance all other revolutions, and as the necessity of discerning the signs of the times was greater in this than in any preceding instance, attention was recalled to these prophetic marks also, by a literal and miraculous fulfilment of some of them. Before the great and terrible day of that period, which began, as St. Peter teaches us, with the descent of the Holy Ghost,† the sun was to be 'turned into darkness,' and the natural world thrown into disturbance. The principal meaning of the prophecy was the change itself from the old to the new kingdom of God; but, as if to rouse attention to the prophecy in the course of this its fulfilment, at the crucifixion, the sun was literally darkened, and the earth quaked. As in the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecies by our Lord, it was further of importance that those signs should be miraculous; in order to assure those who observed in them a coincidence with

^{*} Joel ii. 30, 31.

[†] Acts ii. 15.

the prophecy of Joel, that to these signs, or more properly, to the events to which they were appended, must the prophecy apply. The affixing a miraculous character to the fulfilment of a prophecy which might otherwise accord with more events than one, makes that prophecy as definite in its application as those to which one and only one event corresponds. Observe how this object, in the present instance, was accomplished. Neither an eclipse of the sun, nor an earthquake, are in themselves miraculous. That the sun should be so darkened as to give no more light at noon than it does at midnight, is rare, but involves no necessary miracle: for this actually did take place and was observed in Portugal less than two centuries ago. But that the sun should be eclipsed at all, unless when the moon is new, is quite as contrary to the established laws of the universe, as that water should burn or fire wet us. Now the eclipse at the crucifixion was a total eclipse. and it took place at the full of the moon. are certain of; because the celebration of the Passover was regulated by the full moon, and never could take place at any other part of the month. Total darkness. moreover, resulting from a natural eclipse, would not last beyond three or four minutes; whereas this continued from the sixth until the ninth hour. Thus the eclipse was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy; and it was ordered, that it should be a miraculous fulfilment of it, in order to excite attention to it, and to assure those who witnessed it, that the prophecy's literal fulfilment was now intended.

Meanwhile those who, being familiar with the language of prophecy, regarded these expressions as a figurative description of a mighty change in God's kingdom, would have their attention awakened to the prophecy, and be led to look for that change as at hand, and to connect it with the miracle they witnessed. And if they had been followers and hearers of the crucified Messiah, it must have awakened further and more solemn thoughts. His disciples must have remembered, that, as if in allusion to the holy Shechinah, he used to call himself 'the light of the world.'* They must have seen in that noontide night, a still more awful and mysterious darkness stealing over all the land of Israel, in that God's glory was withdrawn. To their eye the Temple of God manifest in the flesh' was destroyed, the light of Israel was quenched.

Besides the eclipse which alone is noticed by St. Mark and St. Luke, St. Matthew makes mention of another sign, an earthquake.† These were the two great features in the prophetic picture of 'wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath;' and to the earthquake therefore we naturally assign the same character as to the eclipse. But as an earthquake has nothing in it miraculous, where, it may be asked, was the miracle in this instance? where that evidence of the absence of natural causes, which might stand in lieu of such a specific application of prophecy as

^{*} John viii. 12; ix. 5; xii. 46.

[†] Chap. xxvii. 51.

would render this and no other earthquake a fulfilment of it? To this question it may be answered, that, making as it did a part of the prophetic picture, it was not necessary that more than one feature in that picture should be so marked by miracle. those who witnessed the eclipse were assured that it was the fulfilment of the prophecy; they must have regarded the earthquake, or any other physical disturbance in heaven and earth, as connected with it, and partaking of its supernatural character. is, indeed, very possible, that, besides the eclipse and the earthquake, other signs in heaven and earth might have been given, so as to make the fulfilment of the prophetic picture more complete; although they are not mentioned in the Scripture record. the same time, it does so happen, that even to the earthquake there was a miracle appended. Amongst the effects of the earthquake which are recorded, one is, that the stones of many sepulchres were rolled away. Now, after the resurrection, out of these sepulchres many dead bodies, having received new life, walked and visited their friends at Jerusalem.* By this circumstance, then, of the dead walking out of the sepulchres so opened, the earthquake itself was declared to be a divine interposition—even as when the angel rolled the stone away from our Lord's own sepulchre. The miraculous darkness could be known to be miraculous only to those who understood enough

^{*} Matth. xxvii. 52.

about eclipses to he sure that one could not naturally take place at the full of the moon, or be of such long duration: but the release of the dead bodies from their graves by an earthquake, was a miraculous mark set on the earthquake which all could understand. He who ran might read that this was the prophetic sign of the acceptable year of the Lord, and that it was He who was proclaiming liberty to the captives of the grave.*

The last sign which remains to be noticed is the rending of the vail of the Temple. As this vail curtained off the holy of holies, from the parts of the sacred building to which the people had access, it was guarded with sufficient care to make it secure against any who should venture to violate it. Like the sepulchre after the seal had been set on it and the watch appointed, it could only have been disturbed by superhuman agency. But why should the miracles of the crucifixion take this particular turn? Remember what purpose this vail served. It separated that most sacred recess, which the High Priest alone might enter, from the rest of the Temple. It formed the first mark of distinction which was observed in the use of the Temple with respect to the several gradations of those who worshipped therein. In these gradations consisted a feature of the Jewish Church which was not to be preserved in that which was to succeed it. Among the characteristics of the Christian dispensa-

^{*} Isaiah lvi. 1, 2. Luke iv. 18, 19.

tion, as contrasted with the Jewish, no one is more prominent than its unity or uniformity. Until Christ, the privileges of the covenant between Jehovah and his worshippers, were dispensed in unequal degrees to the several classes into which they were divided. The partial proselyte to Judaism was considered as possessing a claim superior indeed to the idolater; but much inferior to him who wholly conformed. There was a distinction between the portions of the Temple to which these two kinds of strangers were admitted; and from their place there, the one was called the proselyte of the gate, the other the proselyte Again, the lineal descendant of of righteousness. Abraham considered himself heir to promises which set him above the most perfect proselyte. Nor did the gradations end here. From the first institution of the Jewish Church the principle of inequality was laid in the division of the Israelites themselves into two classes—that of the Levites, and that of those who were not like the Levites to partake of certain priestly privileges. The very Levites again were marked by a very strong line of separation, and the family of Aaron reserved for the office of High Priest, and its attendant privileges. They alone entered into the holy of holies. within that vail, which was thus connected with the series of gradations and distinctions. The rending of this vail, therefore, was a plain symbol that these partition walls were not to divide the worshippers in the Lord's new Temple, into separate classes, enjoying distinction and degrees of grace and privilege.

It told figuratively but emphatically of that change which was afterwards preached by the apostle Paul, when he insisted on 'One Lord, one baptism, one faith;' and when struggling against the prejudices of his countrymen, he besought them to preserve 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'* dispensation of the Spirit, all was one and uniform, Once a Christian, whether before Jew, or proselyte, or idolater, the churchman was to claim and to enjoy the highest degree of grace. In the new Temple there was to be no family like Aaron's, no tribe like Levi's, no nation like the Israelites. The partition walls between outward and inner court, between the rest of the Temple and its holy of holies, were all broken down; and the idolater who came in at the eleventh hour, was as free of that new Temple, as the converted son of Abraham, whose fathers had served God from the first dawn and early morning of the Church.

This, be it remembered, is no mere human interpretation of the rending of the vail of the Temple. Its import was indeed so obvious, that human reason alone would probably put on it such an explanation. But the view that has been taken of it is derived from St. Paul's comment on the change from the old to the new dispensation, in his Epistle to the Hebrews. A portion, therefore, of the ninth and tenth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, will be a proper conclusion to these remarks.

^{*} Ephesians iv. 3, 5.

222 Accomplishment of prophecy at the crucifixion.

Chap. ix. 1-8. x. 16-22.

Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table. and the shew-bread, which is called The Sanctuary: and, after the second vail, the tabernacle, which is called The Holiest of all; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. and the tables of the covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God: but into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost this signifying, That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF PROPHECY AT THE CRUCI-FIXION.

Ver. 23, 24, 28.

And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he received it not. And when they had crucified him, they parted his garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take.——And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.

The Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, are such as precluded any attempt to fulfil them all by any but the Messiah himself. They admit of being divided into two classes, to both of which this remark is applicable; and there are but few, if any, which may not be assigned to one or the other of these classes.

First, there are those, the fulfilment of which, supposed not one, but a series of miracles, as, for example, the opening the eyes of the blind, and other miraculous cures.

There are others, again, the fulfilment of which depended on unforeseen accident, or on the agency of others-on the agency of those, I mean, who could not be suspected of collusion; or on accident, which could not be foreseen or reckoned on by an impostor. this description are the earthly genealogy of the Messiah, and his birth-place. Of this kind also was the prediction that he should be prized by his enemies at just thirty pieces of silver, neither more nor less. Most of these prophetic marks were in themselves trifling; and very reasonably so; because, as they were to make no part of the Messiah's agency, they required to be important in nothing but their exact fulfilment. And being exactly fulfilled, their very want of importance made them to be the more striking, because the less likely to be thought of, and aimed at, by the person whose cause they supported. Whenever it so happened, however, that one of these trivial prophetic marks did depend on our Lord's agency, then, we may observe, that he gives it an additional difficulty and importance, by making its accomplishment the result of a miracle; that it might not be mistaken for a mere human contrivance, or a foreseen accident. Thus his riding into Jerusalem on an ass was remarked to have been connected with the exercise of divine interposition.

Most of the prophetic characteristics of the Messiah, however, which belong to this class-which depended, namely, for their fulfilment on accident-arose, as we might expect, out of the events of that period, when he had resigned himself to his enemies, and when they, and not he, were the contrivers of what befel him. The narrative of the crucifixion, accordingly, abounds with these. Besides the fulfilment of those prophecies. which represent him as an object of scorn, and as one to be esteemed stricken of God,* (all which is so apparent in the treatment which he experienced at the hands of his enemies,) we may observe certain specific and extraordinary fulfilments. Such was the provision that his garment should not be parted, but cast lots for +--that no bone of him should be broken 1---that (strange contrariety) he should make his grave with the wicked, and yet be with the rich in his death; & a prophecy which was fulfilled by his being crucified between two malefactors, and afterwards buried honourably in a rich man's new sepulchre.

^{*} Isaiah liii. 3, 4. † Ps. xxii. 18. ‡ John xix. 36, compared with Exod. xii. 46. § Isaiah liii. 9.

To these Old Testament prophecies, so strikingly fulfilled, he had himself added some predictions, for the confirmation of his disciples' faith in this their most trying emergency. As, for instance, that he should be delivered over to the Gentiles, instead of falling a victim, as was far more likely, to the immediate violence of his countrymen—that he should be crucified, instead of being stoned, as had been so often attempted.* The effect of all this on the disciples, must have been to enlighten and establish their faith, and to rouse them from the painful and mournful reflections into which his death plunged them. It may be observed, that, in all the accounts of the crucifixion, with whatever variety they are given, while, on the one hand, its close coincidence with prophecy is carefully pointed out, no expression of horror, or sympathy, or mourning, mixes with the record. Fools, and slow of heart, even to the period of the crucifixion, to believe all that the prophets had written, all that Christ himself had predicted—prone as they had been to be sorrowful, and even to chide with him at every mention of his death-no sooner was that event over, and the Holv Ghost had called up the past to their remembrance. and taught them its full import, than the neglected meaning of so many speaking images in the Lord's life and death predominated over every other impression. As witnesses and historians of his life, they, henceforth, were eager to describe and give effect to those

^{*} Mark x. 33, 34. Matth. xx. 18, 19.

very features of his ministry, which they had failed to interpret, and which now, from being so pointedly recorded, leave us in wonder at the dulness of any who could have been at a loss to comprehend them. In their account of Christ's sufferings, his mockery, and his death, that it behoved him so to suffer, is a view which they are especially careful to impress on us, because it was the view which they had found the greatest difficulty in recognizing themselves.

THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE DEATH OF JESUS AND HIS RESURRECTION.

Ver. 42-47.

And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

'It is finished,' were the words which Jesus uttered, immediately before he commended his spirit into his Father's hands, and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The works of the Father who had sent him were then finished. The night had come when he was no longer to work.* Had we, then, no portion in

^{*} John ix. 4.

that interval which divided his death from his resurrection? Was his holy ministry for man suspended, or was it carried on in secret? These were the days in which his disciples were to fast and mourn. bridegroom was taken away from them.* They may seek him in the rich man's tomb; but him they will not find there. † The corse that lies in that tomb is miraculously preserved from corruption, 1 and kept ready for returning life and glory; but it is a mere corse, bereft alike of the divine and the human spirit. Whither, in this interval of mourning, did he go? That interval, so far as our knowledge on this point is concerned, is a blank. We may say, perhaps, that he went to Paradise. His words to the penitent malefactor, on the cross, were, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' But this cannot mean the Paradise which was the abode of Adam and Eve before the Fall. It is doubtful whether any locality at all is intended by the expression; the more likely meaning being, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in a state of rest and bliss.'

There is rather an obscure passage in the first Epistle of St. Peter, in which the Apostle has been supposed by some to say, that our Lord, in this interval, went to a place assigned to the departed spirits of the disobedient and wicked, to preach his Gospel to them. St. Peter's words do not, however, bear this interpretation. What he says is, 'Christ

^{*} Matth. ix. 15. † John xiii. 33.

[‡] Acts ii. 25-31, compared with Psalm xvi. 10.

also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited, in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.'* This surely means that the Holy Spirit, by which Christ was quickened after death, preached, through the preachers of righteousness, to the disobedient and sinful world before the flood-to those spirits which were held in the bondage of Satan. The Apostle, in the first chapter of this same Epistle, in like manner, calls the Spirit which inspired the prophets of old time, to prophesy concerning Christ, 'the Spirit of Christ, which was in them.' +

There is as little reason for supposing, as some likewise have done, that information is afforded us, as to where the spirit of Jesus was, in this interval, by St. Paul's comment on the Psalmist's prophecy that he should 'ascend on high,' and 'lead captivity captive.' \(\) 'Now that he ascended,' writes the Apostle, 'what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?' \(\) Surely the descending which was implied in Christ's ascending, must be his coming from his abode in the highest

^{* 1} Peter iii. 18-20.

^{† 1} Peter i. 11.

¹ Psalm lxviii. 18.

[§] Ephes. iv. 9.

heavens down to the earth, even, as the Apostle expresses it, 'into the lower parts of the earth,'—into the depths of the tomb.

In another prophecy of the Psalmist, which is cited and applied by St. Peter, it is written, 'Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither shalt thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption; * i. e., as the Apostle authorizes us to interpret the words, not only was Christ's flesh preserved from corruption; but his soul or spirit was not left in hell; and was, therefore, it is argued, during the interval in which the body lay in the tomb, in-not what we commonly mean by the word Hell-but, where departed spirits are. faith, as set forth in the Apostles' Creed, is comprised in what we so learn. 'He descended into hell;' i. e., where the spirit of man goes when separated by death from the body. In other words, there was, in his case, a consummation of death, even as in the case of any mere mortal man.

^{*} Acts ii. 25-31, compared with Psalm xvi. 10.

CHAPTER XVI.

JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD.

ST. MARK'S Gospel has been hitherto our text-book. We are now, however, arrived at a portion of our Lord's history, for a complete and accurate view of which it will be necessary to combine the several statements of the four Evangelists, and, with them, that further information on the subject, which we find in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. Each of these narratives is, by itself, clear and intelligible; but the comparison of any two, suggests the need of such a thread to the narrative, as may reconcile apparent disagreement, and enable us to arrange the incidents in their proper order. The following summary may, it is hoped, be found useful for this purpose.

DAY OF THE RESURRECTION.

The earthquake; the rolling away of the stone from the sepulchre by an angel; and the terror and (it would seem) the flight of the guard. Matt. xxviii. 2—4.

Visit of Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and other women to the sepulchre, for the purpose of embalming the body. *Mark* xvi. 1—5. *Luke* xxiv. 1—3. *John* xx. 1.

Mary Magdalene (apparently quitting her companions)

hastens to Peter and John, and reports the removal of the body. John xx. 2.

Vision of two angels to the women left by Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, directing them to go and tell the disciples that Jesus was risen. *Matt.* xxviii. 5—7. *Mark* xvi. 4—7. *Luke* xxiv. 4—8.

These women flee from the sepulchre in terror and amazement, Mark xvi. 8, and, it would seem, parted company. Some of them carry their report to the apostles. Matt. xxviii. 8. Mark xvi. 8. Luke xxiv. 10.

Visit of Peter and John to the sepulchre, in consequence of these reports. Luke xxiv. 12. John xx. 3—10.

Appearance of the Lord to Mary Magdalene, who had returned with Peter and John to the sepulchre, and was left there by them. Mark xvi. 9—11. John xx. 11—18. (First.)

Appearance of Jesus to others of the women who had fled and parted company at seeing the vision of angels at the sepulchre; and his message to his disciples, appointing them to meet him in Galilee. *Matt.* xxviii. 9, 10. (Second.)

Appearance to Peter. 1 Corinth. xv. 5. (Third.)

Appearance to Cleopas and another disciple, in their journey to Emmaus. *Mark* xvi. 12, 13. *Luke* xxiv. 13—35. (*Fourth*.)

Appearance to the apostles assembled, Thomas being absent. Mark xvi. 14—18. Luke xxiv. 36—49. John xx. 19—25. 1 Corinth. xv. 5. (Fifth.)

EIGHTH DAY AFTER THE RESURRECTION.

Appearance to the apostles assembled, Thomas being present. John xx. 26—29. (Sixth.)

BETWEEN THE EIGHTH AND THE FORTIETH DAY FROM THE RESURRECTION.

Appearance at the sea of Tiberias. John xxi. 1—24. (Seventh.)*

Appearance on a mountain in Galilee. *Matt.* xxviii. 16—20. To more than five hundred brethren at once. 1 *Corinth.* xv. 6. (*Eighth.*)

Appearance to James. 1 Corinth. xv. 7. (Ninth.)

FORTIETH DAY FROM THE RESURRECTION.

The Ascension. Mark xvi. 19. Luke xxiv. 50—52. Acts i. 3—11. 1 Corinth. xv. 7. (Tenth.)

Following the order of events, as given in the foregoing abstract, we will now return to the narrative. The dead body of Jesus had been taken from the cross, on the afternoon of the day on which he was crucified, and conveyed to a new tomb, belonging to a rich man, Joseph of Arimathæa. It was the fond wish of some who had loved and honoured him, that it should be embalmed, and so preserved from decay; but the near approach of the Sabbath hindered its being done at once. The body was, therefore, deposited in this tomb. The chief priests and Pharisees, mindful of his having foretold that he would rise from

^{*} St. John's statement that this was 'the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples,' means, probably, that it was the third time of his showing himself to them collectively; the appearances which this Evangelist selected for record being chiefly those which took place while the disciples were in assembly. See chap. xx. 19 and 26.

the dead on the third day, and suspecting that his disciples might secretly remove the corse, and pretend that he had risen, asked Pilate to take measures for preventing them. The tomb was, in consequence, sealed, and a guard of Roman soldiers stationed to watch it. Such was the state of things during the Saturday that intervened between the day of the Crucifixion and that of the Resurrection. Sunday morning, there was a great earthquake, an angel of the Lord descended and rolled away the stone which had closed the sepulchre, and the terrified guard appear to have fled in their panic. sepulchre was, therefore, neither closed nor watched, when, still at a very early hour, Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women, came for the purpose of embalming the body. That body was no longer a corse. Jesus had risen, Listen we to the narrative.

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE.

(First Appearance.)

Matt. xxviii. 1-10.

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go

quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Mark xvi. 1-11.

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here; behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive. and had been seen of her, believed not.

Luke xxiv. 1-12.

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and, as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them. Why seek we the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men. and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

John xx. 1-18.

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early. when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he, stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie; and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them. Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing. and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him. and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

Jesus, after rising from the dead, appeared first to Mary Magdalene. This is expressly stated by St. Mark. She was called Mary Magdalene, or 'of Magdala,' to distinguish her from others of that name; as, for instance, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and Mary the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

St. Paul, in his enumeration of those by whom Jesus was seen after his resurrection, begins with Peter. It is evident, however, that St. Paul did not intend to enumerate all the appearances of Jesus to his disciples, nor does he say that Peter was the first who saw him. He probably began with Peter, because he was the first of the appointed witnesses who saw

him; it being partly with a view to include himself among these, that he mentioned the subject.

To begin, then, with our Lord's appearance to Mary. Well acquainted, as she must have been, with the person of Jesus, she would seem not to have recognized him, at first; not, indeed, until she heard him address her. This is remarkable. We will take another occasion, however, of remarking on it. St. John further tells us, that on her suddenly recognizing him, and exclaiming 'Master,' Jesus said to her, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.'

Why he forbad her to touch him, and what connexion there was between that prohibition and his not having yet ascended into Heaven, is not very obvious. West, in his excellent work on the Resurrection, explains it thus: 'I take Christ's forbidding Mary Magdalene to touch him, to have been meant as a signification of his intending to see her and his disciples again; just as in ordinary life, when one friend says to another, 'Don't take leave of me, for I am not going yet,' he means to let him know that he purposes to see him again before he sets out on his journey.'* But then our Lord's words to Mary, if this had been his meaning, would have been, 'I am not yet going to ascend;' instead of which he tells her,

^{*} West On the Resurrection.

'I am not yet ascended.' A more correct paraphrase would seem to be, 'Do not stop to assure yourself of my bodily presence by feeling and handling me. I am not, as you seem to suppose, revealing myself to you transiently from Heaven. I have not yet ascended thither. I am still in my sojourn on earth. Go, at once, to my brethren with this message concerning my ascension.'

JESUS APPEARS TO SOME OF THE WOMEN ON THEIR WAY FROM THE SEPULCHRE.

(Second appearance.)

Matt. xxviii. 9, 10.

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

From a comparison of the several Gospel narratives, it would seem that Mary Magdalene, and other women with her, went, very early in the morning, to the sepulchre; and that, on finding the stone rolled away, Mary Magdalene must have quitted her companions, and hastened with the tidings to Peter and John; whilst they remained, entered the sepulchre, and saw the vision of angels. The effect of this vision on them was extreme terror and amazement. They fled; and, in order to reconcile the several narratives, we must conclude, that, in their flight and distraction, they parted company. Some of them went direct to

the apostles with the report of what they had seen and heard at the sepulchre. Others did not; and it is to these others that Jesus must have appeared, having previously shown himself to Mary after her return to the sepulchre with Peter and John, when left there alone by their departure.

These women, in their fright and excitement, held Jesus by the feet, and worshipped him; probably, as was suggested in Mary's case, to assure themselves that it was he in bodily substance, and to detain him, that he may not vanish from them. Much in the same strain as he addressed Mary, he dismissed them too, with a message to his disciples, 'Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.'

JESUS APPEARS TO PETER.

(Third appearance.)

Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5.

(See Ninth Appearance, p. 261.)

JESUS APPEARS TO TWO DISCIPLES ON THEIR WAY TO EMMAUS.

(Fourth appearance.)

Mark xvi. 12, 13.

After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue; neither believed they them.

Luke xxiv. 13-35.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmans, which was from Jerusalem about threescore

furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk. and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them. What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: and when they found not his body. they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory! And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread. and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying,

The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

When these two disciples quitted the assembly of their fellow-disciples to go to Emmaus, the only intelligence which could have been received was the original statement of Mary Magdalene to Peter and John, that the body had been removed; that of some of her companions, that they had seen a vision of angels at the sepulchre, and the confirmation of Mary Magdalene's statement by Peter and John on their return from visiting the sepulchre in consequence of Mary Magdalene's report.

After those disciples had set out for Emmaus. Mary Magdalene may be supposed to have arrived from her second visit to the sepulchre, where she had probably been left by Peter and John when she accompanied them back thither; and to have reported that appearance of the Lord to her which took prece-Some of the women, to whose party she dence of all. originally belonged, soon after were favoured with a similar revelation; Peter may have been the next to see the Lord, on his going with John a second time to the sepulchre, in consequence of Mary Magdalene's At all events, Peter's revelation must second report. have occurred before the return of these two disciples from Emmaus; for, on their return, they were greeted with the intelligence, that the Lord had 'risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon.'

If it be asked, how the disciples came to be in

assembly at the early hour when the first reports are said to have been brought to them, their recent affliction and their fears for their own safety may alone account for it. But it may be that, remembering our Lord's prediction, that he would rise from the dead on the third day, they came together on the first dawn of that day to see whether the prediction would have any fulfilment, and what that fulfilment would be.

Two of them, however, as appears from this portion of the narrative, left the assembly, on some errand to Emmaus, having given up, perhaps, all hope of their Master's promise being made good. In their way. they were favoured with a visit from him. Two points in this interview should be noticed. The first is, that Jesus should have walked so long, and have so long conversed with them, and yet have been unknown to them. The second is the inward sensation which they described, by saying that 'their hearts burned within them;' and which they afterwards thought sufficient to have enabled them, had they attended to it, to discover him.

With respect to the first point, if we look back to the account of his appearing to Mary Magdalene, we shall find that she too was as slow to recognize him as these disciples, and did so only on his pronouncing her name. On the present occasion, it is expressly said, that the disciples' 'eyes were holden, that they should not know him.' What this miraculous concealment consisted in, it is neither easy nor needful to determine. Neither is it clear for what purpose Jesus so disguised himself. Possibly he may have designed to disconnect their sense of his presence from the accidents of his bodily appearance; thus preparing them and us for knowing him when coming to us spiritually, but not less really, than if we heard his voice, and saw and handled his person. 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'*

The internal sensation to which the disciples allude, may, in like manner, have been some mode of divine manifestation, effected by an impression on the mind, which might afterwards serve, when repeated and recognized, as a proof that Christ, though unseen, was with them, strengthening them under affliction, suggesting to them or prohibiting them when acting, preaching, or writing, and deciding for them when deliberating. Some internal monition they must have continually needed for these purposes, in their after ministry; and if, when first experienced it was not understood, it would be when repeated again and again. Like Samuel of old, these two disciples did not yet know the Lord when thus speaking to them; but when afterwards their hearts felt that same inward burning repeated, they would naturally cry out, 'Lord, here am I.'t

^{*} John xx. 29.

^{† 1} Samuel iii.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE ELEVEN. (Fifth appearance.) Mark xvi. 14-18.

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Luke xxiv. 36-49.

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them. Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them. Have we here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them. These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms. concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

John xx. 19-25.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this. he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whose soever sins ve retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

When Cleopas and his fellow-disciple returned to the assembly which they had left at Jerusalem, and were reporting what had happened to them, Jesus appeared in the midst of them, and gave them proofs of his bodily resurrection. This is the fifth and the last time, so far as the Scripture record informs us, of Jesus being seen on the day of the resurrection. That day was the day next to the Jewish sabbath, and consequently answering to our Sunday, the first day of the week. It was on account of our Lord's resurrection on that day, that it was adopted by the Christians for ever after as the weekly day of rest and devotion. On that day week, accordingly, the disciples were again assembled, when Jesus again appeared to them.

JESUS APPEARS AGAIN TO THE ELEVEN, AND CON-VINCES THOMAS.

(Sixth appearance.)
John xx. 24-29.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto them, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Thomas, who had been absent on the former occasion when Jesus appeared to the assembly of disciples, and had refused assent to the accounts given him of the Lord's frequent appearances, now saw him, believed, and expressed his faith in him as his Lord and his God.

Throughout the history of the resurrection, nothing is more remarkable than the slowness of the apostles to believe the fact, even when asserted by eye-witnesses of their own number. This has been adduced as an additional reason to others for believing their report; inasmuch as, notwithstanding their previous incredulity, they found grounds subsequently for believing

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and preaching the doctrine of the Resurrection, as a fundamental truth of the Gospel, although they exposed themselves, by doing so, to persecution and And it is, no doubt, an additional reason for our accepting their evidence. But when an attempt is made to render the case still stronger by representing them as incredulous persons, that rather weakens than strengthens the argument, and is, moreover, a view which we are not warranted to take. Far from their being incredulous, we have good reason for supposing the contrary. Their countrymen were especially credulous. In that very age, the Jewish people were ready to listen to one pretender after another, claiming to be the Messiah. Why should we suppose the apostles exempt from this general tendency? Surely they were not exempt from it; nor is it requisite for their credibility to suppose that they were. All that needs to be ascertained in their case. and in the case of any alleged deception which may arise from credulity, is, whether the deception, if deception it was, favoured their prejudices, or ran counter to them. If the former, then, these witnesses were likely to have been misled through their credulity; if the latter, their credulity would be likely to have made them even indisposed to admit what, in justice and candour, they ought to have admitted. Credulity is a strong disposition to believe; and to believe what? No one can have a strong disposition to believe contrary statements. He who is credulous with respect to ghosts or witches, is the most incredulous with respect to any explanations which go to destroy the belief in supernatural appearances, and in Satan's extraordinary agency. Now the prejudices, the expectations, the eager anticipations, the credulity, in short, of the apostles, disposed them to believe just those things which were contradicted by our Saviour. in his teaching, his life, his death, and resurrection; and hence it was that they required more evidence than might have sufficed for minds less biassed. 'Except I shall see,' said Thomas, 'in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. Had their credulity found in Jesus an aspirant to a temporal kingdom, and a champion for Israel against its enemies and oppressors, one miracle—an apparent miracle—(for it would have been less likely to be examined,) might have induced them to assent to his claims. But this very credulity neutralized the impression made by all his miracles, and dictated the desponding exclamation, 'We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.'

JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

(Seventh appearance.)

John xxi. 1-24.

· After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias: and on this wise showed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter

saith unto them. I go a fishing. They say unto him. We also go with thre. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter. It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship, (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them. Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise, This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.* So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him. Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him. Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? and he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast

^{*} See Note, p. 232.

young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saving abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

During the period of forty days which elapsed from the resurrection to the ascension of Jesus, he continued to manifest himself, on various occasions, to his apostles and other disciples. Sometimes he was seen of the apostles only, sometimes of more than the apostles; sometimes by one person, at other times by two or three. Of these appearances the last considered is the sixth on record, and this at which we are-now pausing, the seventh. In all we reckon up ten. Possibly he may have been seen still oftener. whether these ten appearances were selected for record. by the sacred writers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from a greater number, or comprise all; each contributes something of its own that is important towards our obtaining a complete knowledge of the revelation of Jesus risen. We have seen that this is so in the case of the preceding narratives, and we shall find it to be so as we turn our attention to those that follow; in none more so than in this of his appearing to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias.

Nothing, as has been already observed, was harder to be believed by the disciples, than the truth of our Lord's resurrection. The case of Thomas, who continued to hold out in his dissent, notwithstanding the assertion of his fellow disciples that Jesus had been seen; notwithstanding the interpretation of the ancient prophecies, which two of them asserted that they had learnt from him during one of those appearances; notwithstanding, too, that the Lord himself had foretold his resurrection — the case of Thomas proves this extraordinary incredulity about it, in whatever way we may account for that incredulity. In impressing on their minds, accordingly, a truth so irreconcileable with their preconceived notions-so opposite to their credulity-our Lord seems to have pursued the same course of gradual and progressive revelation, which characterized his whole dispensation of Gospel truth. The apostles were his official witnesses, and more especially (according to the emphatic designation occasionally assumed by them) witnesses of the resurrection.* But how was it that they were admitted to a competent knowledge of that event to which they were especially to bear testimony? Even. by that gradual illumination, which was most likely to be received soberly, candidly, and retentively, in the

^{*} Acts ii. 32; iii. 15; X. 41.

case of men so circumstanced. On the eye long closed against the light we should produce only distress and indistinctness by admitting a sudden and unexpected blaze of sunshine. The resurrection as made known to the disciples, was accommodated to a long closing of their mind's eye against light and The entire identity of nature in Jesus risen from death, and in him whom they followed before his death, was not at once fully established, but was gradually developed. First, his chosen witnesses heard of his having been seen from others; next, some of them saw his empty tomb; then, he is himself merely seen by one of them. This was the first appeal to their senses, for his identity; and this was followed up by his conversing with them separately and collectively, taking food with them, and allowing and desiring them to handle him; each act being a fuller evidence than the preceding of his being identically the same their Lord and their God.

And yet there was something still wanting for the assurance of many—a further manifestation, which it was perhaps not unreasonable for his chosen witnesses, at all events, to expect, as it was not thought unfitting that it should be given—a mark of perfect identity, which if not missed at first, in the sudden tumult of joy, might yet, if altogether omitted, have proved the occasion of doubt, when he proceeded afterwards to give them their commission, and to invest them with heavenly powers, such as none but God tabernacled in the flesh could have authority to give. He had

satisfied them of his identity with the man Christ Jesus, and having familiarized their minds with this truth, he now—preparatory to the meeting which he had appointed for the whole body of his witnesses on a mountain in Galilee—he now, at the sea of Tiberias, establishes, for their satisfaction, his identity as God in Christ—as the Immanuel.

How was this effected? Our Lord's divine nature had been attested, during his former intercourse with his disciples, by two kinds of superhuman agencyby miracle and by prophecy. In this interview at the sea of Tiberias, he once again displayed both. He caused a miraculous draught of fishes, and he predicted the fate of Peter and John. More-both miracle and prophecy, or rather one of the prophecies, were such as must have reminded them, in an especial manner, of the former miracles and prophecies of Jesus. The miracle was symbolical, and its symbolical character readily intelligible by its connexion with his many figurative lessons delivered before his This was characteristic of our Lord's miracles. and of his alone. One of the prophecies—that respecting John-was, in like manner, at once a test and evidence, and also a warning against error; a prophecy, in short, applied to purposes beyond its prophetical use; and in this respect unlike all prophecies but those of our Saviour.

To be more explicit. No one who remembers his first call of two of the apostles, and his accompanying hint, 'I will make you *fishers* of men,' as well as the

other allusions and metaphors by which this hint was followed up in his subsequent instructions, can fail to have it suggested, that the miraculous draught of fishes, caused by his presence, after these appointed 'fishers of men' had toiled all night in vain, was intended to remind them of those previous metaphorical lessons; perhaps to intimate, as a completion of those lessons, that, although hitherto their labours had been, comparatively speaking, unavailing, yet, when he came to them according to his promise, the net which they should cast for the souls of men would be even too small for the multitude which should be ready to be enclosed in it.*

And when was he to come? This, we know, was a point about which doubt, even during the apostolic age, was entertained; nor has the Christian world yet ceased to doubt and differ respecting the fulfilment of the declaration. Jesus was then come from the grave, and was bodily amongst them. Although on the cross he had complained that God had forsaken him, and might therefore, without the renewal of his peculiar miracles, have been mistaken for the mere man Jesus. bereft of the indwelling and fulness of the Godhead, vet his perfect identity was now proved. The Christ -God in Christ-was as before manifested, and this manifestation identified with that which had been

^{*} Compare, too, the parable of the net cast into the sea, one of the lessons by which the apostles were familiarized with the use of images drawn from a fisher's employment, for the purpose of conveying Gospel instruction.

miraculously proved to them, by the renewal of the like miraculous and divine agency; by a miracle like his former miracles; and by a prophecy no less distinguished as his own. Was he now come? Against this misapprehension his prophecy concerning John expressly guarded. Speaking of John, he says, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' implying that he had not yet come, in the sense in which he had so often and so emphatically promised to come. It may be added, that the same prophecy was a safeguard also against another error respecting his coming; namely, that it meant his final coming to judge the world. For, at John's death, those who did labour under such a mistake, would naturally revert to another and the true interpretation.

One remark must not be omitted respecting Peter's conduct on this occasion. He alone proceeded to Jesus on the water,* whilst the others went in a boat. This was a display of that improved faith, for want of which, on a former trial, he had begun to sink on that very lake. Having so lately been on the brink of ruin, and having thrice denied his Master, it is natural that this opportunity of showing his faith should have been given, and eagerly embraced.

^{*} The original, εβαλεν έαυτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, admits of being rendered either, according to our Bible translation, 'cast himself into the sea,' or 'cast himself on the sea.' I have adopted the latter as, on the whole, the more probable meaning. It can hardly be supposed that he girt on his fisher's coat for the purpose of going into the water, either to swim or to wade to the vessel.

JESUS APPEARS ON A MOUNTAIN IN GALILEE, TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED BRETHREN AT ONCE.

(Eighth appearance.)

Matth. xxviii. 16-20.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

I Cor. xv. 6.

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

The main purpose of our Lord's so often appearing to his disciples was to satisfy them, and through them all mankind, of his real and full resurrection; his resurrection as to body and soul; and not only so, but the resurrection of the whole man in the same mysterious union as before with the divine nature. It is with a view to this, his entire and unqualified emancipation from the effects of death, in opposition to the many vain theories which heretics, in various ages, have invented respecting the person of the Redeemer, that the second Article of the Church of England contains that very specific statement of the truth impressed on the apostles' minds, 'two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and

Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided.'

In what way this truth was gradually established, by his appearing, from time to time, to his disciples, has been now sufficiently dwelt on. There was one appearance of our Lord, however, which would seem to have been, in some respects, of greater importance than all. Before his death, he spoke of this specially and only-'After I am risen again,' said he, 'I will go before you into Galilee.'* At his sepulchre, the women who were there early on the morning of the resurrection, whilst seeking for his body, were reminded of this by an angel, and sent on a message to the disciples that they should see him in Galilee. He repeated this message himself to some of these women. to whom he subsequently appeared. A certain mountain had been named for this extraordinary interview. In what, then, consisted its importance?

First, it is to be observed, that although Jesus had now manifested himself, it may be, to all his apostles, since his resurrection; yet some might have been present on one occasion, some on another, so that an official summons, and an appointed hour of meeting, might have been requisite to secure the attendance and the evidence of all to the account in which they were afterwards to agree, whether in preaching or framing a document for after ages. It is said, indeed, more than once, that the eleven were assembled when

^{*} Matth. xxvi. 32.

he appeared; yet, on one of these occasions, we know that Thomas was absent. The apostles were emphatically called 'the eleven,' or more commonly 'the twelve,' and a meeting of 'the eleven' or 'the twelve,' or 'the apostles,' would no more imply the presence of every member of the apostolic body, than a meeting of a vestry would imply the attendance of every member of the vestry. At all events, their presence as a body, from which no one should be absent, could only have been accidental. There seems to be good reason why they should, on some one occasion, be formally assembled, to receive as a body that evidence of which they were the joint depositaries.

In the next place, what display of our Lord's return among them as the Immanuel—as perfect man and perfect God—was given on the mountain in Galilee, is not specified. Whether, on that mountain, besides hearing and seeing him, they witnessed some display of his glory, like to that on the Mount of Transfiguration, we are not told; but it is certainly said, that before he came up to them and entered into communication with them, they saw enough to make them worship him. And this is the more remarkable, because when, on other occasions, he appeared to them, they seemed to have required some further proof or assurance, in order to enable them even to recognize him.

Lastly, more than the display of his full emancipation from the effects of the grave, was accomplished by this interview. It was then that he proclaimed his Sovereignty over his kingdom on earth and in Heaven, 'All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth.' It was then he instituted his sacrament of baptism, and commissioned his church, in all ages, to baptize and evangelize all nations, 'Go ye, therefore, and teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' It was then, lastly, he revealed himself as present with his church, though unseen, as long as the world shall endure, 'Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

It is to be observed that St. Paul's mention of our Lord's appearing to five hundred brethren at once, has been coupled with St. Matthew's record of his appearance on a mountain of Galilee, as if both related to the same occurrence. This is the generally received opinion, and it is, probably, correct.

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If, however, the appearance noticed by St. Paul be a different one, his is the only record of it. In either view, what he states is, that most of those present on the occasion were living witnesses at the time of his writing. In either view, too, one purpose for which Jesus manifested himself to so large a body of his disciples, besides his appointed witnesses, was probably this. In the first propagation of the Gospel, almost all the original disciples must have been needed as preachers of the word—so wide was the field of con-

^{*} Literally and more correctly ' make disciples of.'

version, which was suddenly thrown open to the Church. So spoke the Spirit of God by the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, with reference to that extraordinary period, 'The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.' * Very important it was for those who were carrying abroad the tidings of a Saviour crucified and raised from the dead, to have themselves seen that Saviour after his resurrection. On the truth of this one fact turned the whole weight of their Gospel report. which, by thus bringing together more than five hundred of his disciples before his ascension, our Lord not only provided them with a very valuable qualification for the ministry; but furnished an occasion for the establishment of a communication amongst all the believers. To this it may be attributed, that they were found assembled in so large numbers on the day of Pentecost, ready for the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost. Prepared at once by the privilege of being eye-witnesses of the resurrection, and also by the eminent endowments, which were bestowed through the effusion of the Spirit on that day, they constituted a class of disciples qualified, beyond all future ordinary converts, for immediate appointments; and out of these, no doubt, went forth the first promulgators of the faith, Matthias and Barnabas, Stephen and Philip, and others named and unnamed in the inspired annals.

^{*} Psalm lxviii. 11.

JESUS APPEARS TO PETER (third appearance) AND ALSO TO JAMES (ninth appearance.)

I Cor. xv. 5, 7.

He was seen of Cephas.——After that, he was seen of James.

That Peter was favoured with a special interview by Jesus risen, is recorded in St. Luke's narrative, and here again by St. Paul, who adds that James had the same privilege accorded to him. If James the brother of John be intended, it was an additional instance of that preference which Jesus had, on several occasions. shewn to him conjointly with Peter and John. only were present, it may be remembered, at his transfiguration. They were selected from the whole number to witness his restoring Jairus's daughter to life. They, too, were called on to attend and sympathize with him in that most distressing scene of his ministry -his agony in the garden of Gethsemane. We do not learn that John was, like the other two, selected for a separate manifestation to him of his risen Master: but neither was he without a token of that special favour which he had heretofore shared with them. For him alone it was reserved to witness our Lord's coming in the establishment of his spiritual reign; and it was made the subject of a distinct prophecy. Of the importance and gratifying character of this privilege, no words can give a livelier idea than the fervent language of the apostle himself, when hailing

the event on its near approach: 'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'*

JESUS ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN.

(Tenth and last appearance.)

Mark xvi. 19, 20. Luke xxiv. 50—52. Acts i. 1—11. (See also 1 Cor. xv. 7.)

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.—And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass. while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him.——The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me: for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saving, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own But we shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto

[#] Revelation xxii. 20.

the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Our Lord having manifested himself, on various occasions, and having given proof of his return to life the same, in all respects, as he died, met his disciples, lastly, in Jerusalem, led them forth as far as Bethany, and there, in their presence, ascended into Heaven.

We readily discern the fitness and importance of this his formal departure from the world. He had so frequently, from the day of his resurrection, up to that moment, visited the apostles and others of his disciples and again departed, that it was quite requisite to fix, by some significant act, that departure which was to be final—final, I mean, as related to his manifestation in the flesh. Thenceforward his followers were no longer to expect his guidance and comfort in the flesh, but another Comforter was to come,—the Holy Spirit. Him, the Immanuel, 'the heavens were to receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.'*

In reading the account of this solemn and impressive act of our Redeemer, there is one false notion, against which some may require to be cautioned.

^{*} Acts iii. 21.

Jesus was seen ascending into the heavens; but we must not suppose, therefore, that the Godhead was subject to the local accident of ascending with his body, and again descending with the mysterious tongues of flame on the day of Pentecost. God must, at all times, be equally omnipresent. Locality is not a condition of the divine, as it is of our human exist-His nature cannot be circumscribed by place. When, therefore, He is said to come or to go-to ascend or descend—to visit the world or to depart from it—these expressions can only mean, that He has ceased to be manifested—that He has begun again to be manifested—that He has ceased to operate on us that he has begun to do so—and the like. present instance, the visible and bodily ascent of Jesus into the heavens, could only be an expressive token that God was ceasing to be manifested to us in the Person of Jesus Christ; and, in like manner, the opposite token of descending fiery tongues, signified that God was beginning to be manifested in a new way, even by the Holy Spirit.

Whenever grosser notions steal upon your mind—and whose is the mind on which they do not sometimes operate?—ask yourselves the question, Whither was our Lord seen to ascend by the apostles, the witnesses of the ascension? To the heavens; that is, to the sky. But where is heaven? Not surely in the atmosphere that surrounds this world: it is not, surely, a place bounded by the lines of the astronomer or the geographer. Heaven, the abode of God, is not a place,

but that of which a magnificent object like the sky is a type and shadow. It is by analogy that we thus ascribe to God, what is inseparable from man's condition and existence; but one less enlightened than the least in God's present kingdom addressed him nobly when he said, 'Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded.'*

THE END.

^{* 1} Kings viii. 27.

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